THE TREASURE OF ODIREX

BY CHARLES SHEFFIELD

fantastic Stories

July
1978
$1.25
UK:60P
ICD 08288

DAVID R. BUNCH: Send Us A Planet!
GRANIA DAVIS: David's Friend, The Hole
JACK C. HALDEMAN II: What Weighs 8000 lbs...?
SHERWOOD SPRINGER: The Chill Of Distant Laughter
PARKE GODWIN: The Last Rainbow
BARRY N. MALZBERG: Prowl

07
74820 08828

THE JOURNAL OF NATHANIEL WORTH
BY ROBERT F. YOUNG

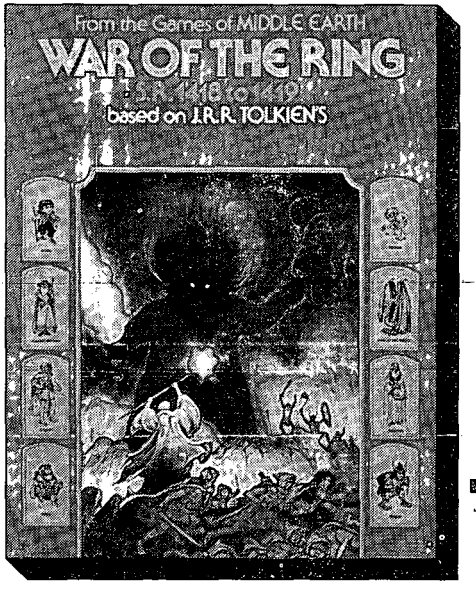
LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

A MAJOR FANTASY PUBLISHING EVENT:

WAR OF THE RING

based on J.R.R. TOLKIEN'S

THE LORD OF THE RINGS



Middle Earth comes alive in this fascinating new game version of J.R.R. Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings*. Every major character is yours to control as the Fellowship forms to oppose the forces of the Dark Lord. All the significant events of the Trilogy–from the Council of Elrond to the climactic encounter at the Crack of Doom–are re-created for you to experience. Middle Earth is yours to explore on the beautiful 31" × 34" four-color game map as you assume the roles of your favorite Tolkien characters and lead your armies into battle for control of the Ring. ***War of the Ring*** is not a frivolous parlor game; rather it is the authorized, authentic portrayal of the richly detailed mythical world of J.R.R. Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings*.

War of the Ring has been specially designed by **SPI**, the leading publisher of history, fantasy, and science-fiction simulation games. ***War of the Ring*** is available now at better book and game stores, nationwide. Ask your dealer for it–or order directly by mail from **SPI**.

SPI has been serving customers by mail since 1970

Send check or money order to:

SPI, Dept. 997
44 East 23rd Street
New York, N.Y. 10010

Your ***War of the Ring*** game contains:

★ Big two-piece, four-color game map of Middle Earth printed on heavy cardstock ★ 112 laminated playing cards depicting characters and events ★ 400 multi-color playing pieces ★ Illustrated and annotated rules booklet ★ Handsome three-color cover with illustrations by artist Tim Kirk ★ Compartmented, plastic storage box.

SPI publishes a complete line of simulation games. Send for our free brochure. SPI is also the publisher of ***Strategy & Tactics Magazine***, the bi-monthly military history magazine that comes complete with its own simulation game. See the coupon for subscription rates►

War of the Ring is produced by SPI. Licensed by Tolkien Enterprises, a division of Elan Merchandising, Inc., Berkeley, California 94710. Unauthorized use of Tolkien names, characters, or places is strictly prohibited. © Copyright 1977 by Tolkien Enterprises, a division of Elan Merchandising, Inc.

Please send me the following games;

☐ **War of the Ring**-$15.00

☐ **Middle Earth** (a three-game set including ***War of the Ring*** plus two smaller Middle Earth battle games, *Gondor* and *Sauron*)-$20.00

Please enter my subscription to Strategy & Tactics Magazine:

☐ 1 year (6 issues):$14 ☐ 2 years (12 issues):$26

☐ 3 years (18 issues):$36 ☐ please send free brochure

*Name (print)*_____

*Street*_____ *Apt#*_____

*City*_____ *State*_____ *Zip*_____

Prices apply to all orders deliverable to USA or APO/FPO addresses. Allow three weeks for delivery. Payment must accompany order. New York residents add sales tax. Foreign customers add $2 surcharge to any order-US funds only. Products are returnable for cash or credit (specify) if returned intact with 15 days of receipt.

THIS LINE FOR OFFICE USE ONLY: CUS CODE TOTAL CREDIT POSTAGE TAX

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

fantastic
Science Fiction & Fantasy STORIES

ALL STORIES NEW & COMPLETE

JULY, 1978 Vol. 27, No. 2

new novelets
THE JOURNAL OF NATHANIEL WORTH
by ROBERT F. YOUNG 6
THE LAST RAINBOW
by PARKE GODWIN 20
THE TREASURE OF ODIREX
by CHARLES SHEFFIELD 54

new short stories
THE CHILL OF DISTANT LAUGHTER
by SHERWOOD SHPRINGER 44
PROWL
by BARRY N. MALZBERG 93
DAVID'S FRIEND, THE HOLE
by GRANIA DAVIS 96
WHAT WEIGHS 8000 POUNDS AND WEARS RED SNEAKERS?
by JACK C. HALDEMAN II 105
SEND US A PLANET?
by DAVID R. BUNCH 108

new features
EDITORIAL **by TED WHITE** 4
FANTASY BOOKS
by FRITZ LEIBER 116
ACCORDING TO YOU 123

Cover copyright © 1978 **by STEVE FABIAN**
Illustrating: **THE JOURNAL OF NATHANIEL WORTH**

SOL COHEN, Publisher
ARTHUR BERNHARD, Associate Publisher
TED WHITE, Editor
GRANT CARRINGTON, Associate Editor, Emeritus
TERRY HUGHES, Assistant Editor
J. EDWARDS, Art Director
PRINT ADVERTISING REP., REP., INC., Advertising Manager

FANTASTIC, Vol. 27, No. 2, July 1978 is published quarterly by ULTIMATE PUBLISHING CO. INC., 69-62 230 Street, Oakland Gardens, Flushing, N.Y. 11364. Editorial Office: Box 7, Oakland Gardens, Flushing, N.Y. 11364. $1.25 a copy. Subscription rates: One year (4 issues) United States and possessions: $5.00, Canada and Pan American Union countries and all other countries, $5.50. Change of address notices, undeliverable copies, orders for subscriptions and other mail items are to be sent to Box 7, Oakland Gardens, Flushing, N.Y. 11364. Second Class Postage paid at Flushing, N.Y. and at additional mailing office. Copyright 1978 by Ultimate Publishing Co., Inc. All rights reserved. Editorial contributions must be accompanied by return postage and will be handled with reasonable care; however, publisher assumes no responsibility for return or safety of art work, photographs or manuscripts. 185580

ARCHIVED TO ISFDB.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

TED WHITE

editorial

GOOD NEWS! With this issue we're back on a bimonthly schedule once more! For two and half years FANTASTIC—and our sister magazine, AMAZING SF—have been published on a quarterly schedule with only four issues a year. That's meant long waits at the newsstand—you've been lucky if you were able to find us regularly on the same newsstand—and a lot of complaints.

Well, that's over now.

Beginning with this issue (and the next issue of AMAZING to appear) both FANTASTIC and AMAZING are back to six issues a year!

This will allow us a more flexible policy on novels—once again we'll be able to run serials (and once again we'll do so only when we can do it in two parts, no more) whenever we have something on hand that's too good to refuse and too long for one issue. (Unfortunately our first serial *won't* be Thomas Burnett Swann's *Cry Silver Bells*, which we accepted in the year before his death but were unable to publish in one issue due to its length, and which I told you would appear here eventually. The reason is that the novel is now available from DAW Books—No. 270; $1.50—which would make its publication here redundant.)

We still have a problem, however—and that is, very simply, that fantasy magazines don't sell as well as science fiction magazines. The sales of FANTASTIC lag well behind those of AMAZING, for example. This is not a new problem; it's been true since *Unknown Worlds* failed, in the early forties, to pick up the sales enjoyed by its sister magazine, *Astounding SF*, and was folded; it was equally true in the early fifties when *Galaxy*'s fantasy companion, *Beyond*, lasted only a few highly praised issues; and in the sixties it was *Worlds of Fantasy*, a later companion to *Galaxy*, which folded after only a handful of issues.

Indeed, of all the fantasy magazines of yore—*Weird Tales* (two incarnations), *Strange Tales*, *Unknown*, *Fantasy Magazine*, *Beyond*, *Fantasy*, *Coven 13*, *Witchcraft & Sorcery*—only two still survive, *The Magazine of Fantasy* (which changed its name with its second issue to *The Magazine of Fantasy & Science Fiction*) and FANTASTIC

This is a sad commentary on the buying habits of the magazine-reading public, but although fantasy, as such, has always enjoyed great popularity (greater than science fiction's, in fact) this has never been true of fantasy *magazines*.

Faced with anemic sales for this magazine, we've begun to add science fiction to the mix. It has always been my theory that science fiction is a subcategory of fantasy, so I feel no real compromise was necessary. The "real" fantasy is still to be found here, moreover; have no fears on that score.

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS: Sometimes I forget that each of you hasn't been in-

(cont. on page 121)

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

READ IT SLOWLY.

You'll want to. It's that good . . . it's The Hugo Winners: 23 speculative fiction stories that have won the science fiction equivalent of the Oscar —Arthur C. Clarke's superb story, "The Star," Jack Vance's classic, "The Dragon Masters," and Poul Anderson's award-winner, "No Truce With Kings," plus 20 more.

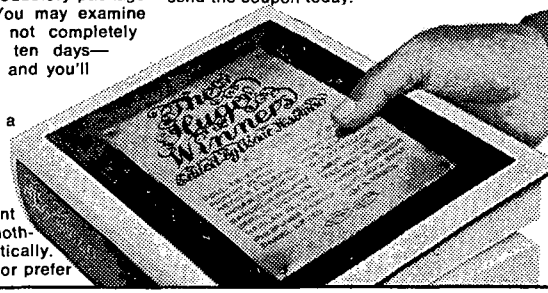
This fabulous 864-page anthology of speculative fiction sells for $15.45 in the original publisher's edition. It's yours, if you wish, as one of 4 books for just 10¢ (plus shipping and handling) when you join The Science Fiction Book Club.

Here's how the Club works:

When your application for membership is accepted, you'll receive your introductory package of four books for just 10¢. You may examine them in your home, and if not completely satisfied, return them within ten days—membership will be cancelled and you'll owe nothing.

About every 4 weeks (14 times a year), we'll send you the Club's bulletin, *Things to Come*, describing the 2 coming Selections and a variety of Alternate choices. If you want both Selections, you need do nothing; they'll be shipped automatically. If you don't want a Selection, or prefer an Alternate, or no book at all, just fill out the convenient form always provided, and return it to us by the date specified. We try to allow you at least ten days for making your decision. If you do not receive the form in time to respond within 10 days, and receive an unwanted selection, you may return it at our expense.

As a member you need take only 4 Selections or Alternates during the coming year. You may resign any time thereafter, or remain a member as long as you wish. At least one of the two Selections each month is only $1.98 plus shipping and handling. Other extra-value selections are slightly higher but always much less than Publishers' Editions. Send no money. But do send the coupon today.



ANY 4 SCIENCE FICTION BEST SELLERS FOR JUST 10¢ with membership

Science Fiction Book Club 45-S131
Dept. PR248, Garden City, N.Y. 11550

I have read your ad. Please accept me as a member in the Science Fiction Book Club.

Send me, as a beginning, the 4 books whose numbers I have indicated below, and bill me just 10¢ (plus shipping and handling). I agree to take 4 additional books during the coming year and may resign anytime thereafter. SFC books are selections for mature readers.

Mr.
Mrs.
Miss _____
Please print

Address _____ Apt. ____

City _____ State _____ Zip ____

If under 18 parent must sign. Order not valid without signature.

6221. **The Foundation Trilogy.** By Isaac Asimov. The ends of the galaxy revert to barbarism. An SF classic. Comb. Price $19.85

4739. **Gateway.** By Frederik Pohl. Travel on alien ships to distant parts of the universe—with no guarantee of return. By the author of **Man Plus.** Pub. ed. $8.95

8532. **The Hugo Winners, Vol. I & II.** Giant 2-in-1 volume of 23 award-winning stories, 1955 to 1970. Asimov introduces each. Pub. ed. $15.45

0141. **Time Storm.** By Gordon R. Dickson. A major novel from an eminent SF author. Mysterious time storms wrack the world sending areas and people backward and forward in time. Pub. ed. $10.00

2295. **The Sword of Shannara.** By Terry Brooks. A massive quest novel in the very best Tolkien tradition. Illustrated by the Brothers Hildebrandt. Pub. ed. $12.95

0109. **Silence is Deadly.** By Lloyd Biggle, Jr. Spying on a new secret weapon proves difficult for Jan Darzek as he travels to a totally deaf world. Pub. ed. $6.95

6403. **The Star Trek Reader III.** Adapted by James Blish, 19 more outstanding and exciting adventures of the Starship Enterprise and its gallant crew. Pub. ed. $8.95

6080. **All My Sins Remembered.** By Joe Haldeman. A young man in search of excitement is sent to the danger spots of the galaxy. By the author of **Mindbridge.** Pub. ed. $7.95

6320. **A World Out Of Time.** By Larry Niven. A black hole in space sends Jerome Corbell 3 million years into Earth's future where the ultimate battle of the sexes is raging. By co-author of **The Mote in God's Eye.** Pub. ed. $7.95

6106. **The Adventures of the Stainless Steel Rat.** By Harry Harrison. 3 thrilling books in 1 exciting volume take us throughout the galaxy. Comb. ed. $15.85

5041. **Star Wars:** From the Adventures of Luke Skywalker. By George Lucas. Life on a backwater planet can be dull, unless you become involved in an interstellar rebellion. Photos from the motion picture. Special Edition.

7625. **The 1977 Annual World's Best SF.** Donald A. Wollheim, ed. The best SF published during 1976 by Asimov, Knight, Varley and others. Includes Tiptree's **Houston, Houston, Do You Read?** Special Edition.

The Science Fiction Book Club offers its own complete hardbound editions sometimes altered in size to fit special presses and save members even more. Members accepted in U.S.A. and Canada only. Canadian members will be serviced from Toronto. Offer slightly different in Canada.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Nathaniel Worth had good reason to cut himself off from all contact with other men . . . but he'd forgotten what it was—!

THE JOURNAL OF NATHANIEL WORTH

ROBERT F. YOUNG

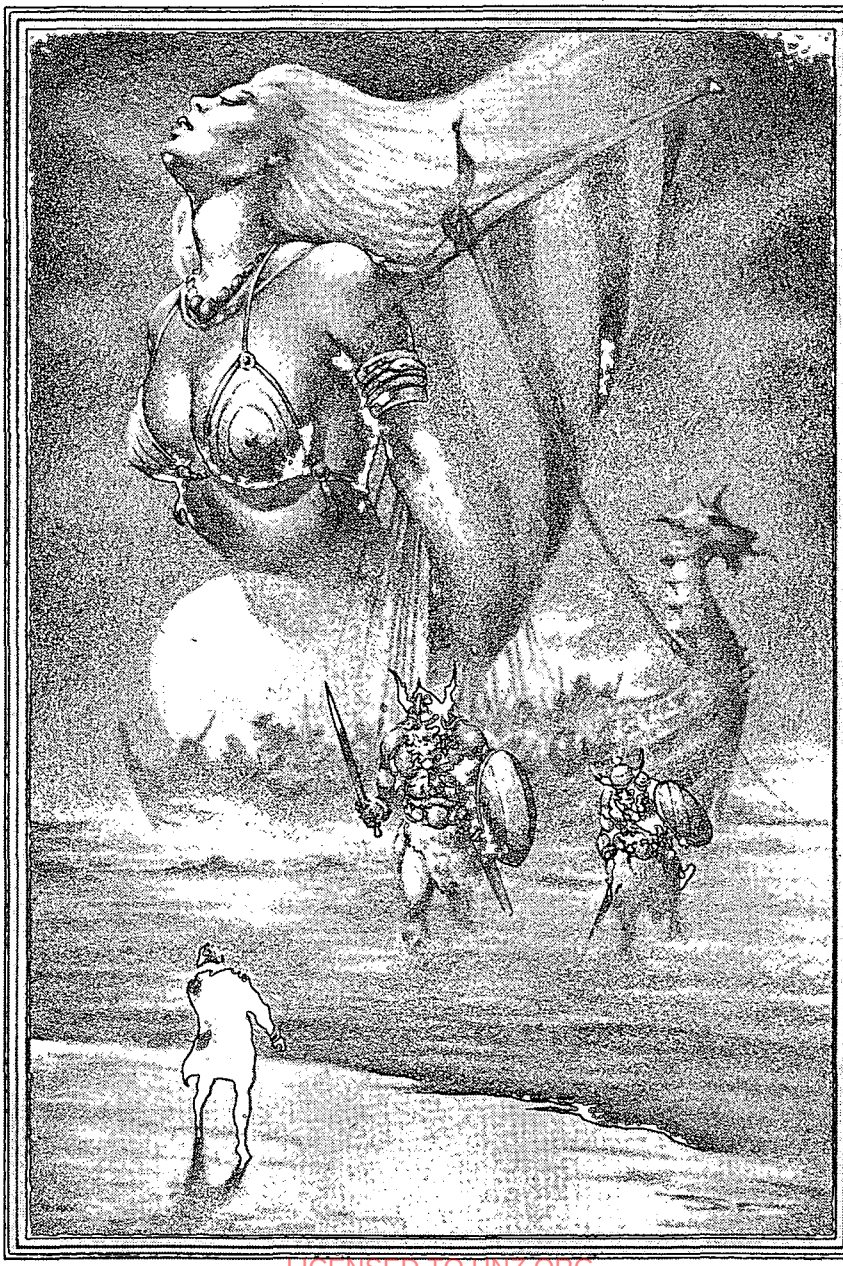
Illustrated by Steve Fabian

October 6th, 1877:

HAVING BEEN coddled during my youth and provided with a private tutor until the age of twenty-one, I was late in stepping forth into the world; hence, it is not surprising that I should have found the world little to my liking. "The oppressor's wrong, the proud man's contumely, the pangs of dispriz'd love,"—all grow unendurable after a time, and upon coming into a modest fortune during my twenty-fifth year after the tragic death of both my parents in a train derailment, I decided to free myself once and forever from the derision that was my lot, and to realize that sweet dream of seclusion to which I had long been host. The small offshore island which I have purchased here in the western section of the state and the mansion which I have had built thereon have devoured the lion's share of my inheritance, but the supplies which I have set by will sustain me for at least twelve months, by the end of which time I hope to have attained a self-sufficiency comparable to that attained by the late Mr. Thoreau. I shall by no means, however, strive for the simplicity about which he became so rhapsodic. Having lived in luxury all my life, I intend to go on doing so.

My mansion was built in accordance with plans drawn up by myself, and it is appointed throughout with custom-made furniture and supplied with custom-made equipment. No doubt, the architecturally cynical would refer to it deprecatingly as an "American Gothic monstrosity", but I am disinclined to take seriously the biased opinions of *soi-disant* experts, regardless of their calling; hence, to me, my mansion is an edifice of rare and wondrous beauty. Its single steepled tower is centrally located and enhances the magnificence of the façade; its gable roof, in addition to two great chimneys, boasts a trio of identical cupolas; its mullioned windows are the last word in elegance. Situated at it is in a grove of hawthorn trees (a species which abounds on the island to the virtual exclusion of all others), with its gray stone walls and steepled tower, its aura of impreg-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

nability, it calls to mind a medieval castle.

This impression is even more pronounced when one is approaching the island from the wooded mainland—a perspective which I value highly, as it will not be mine again for many months to come. I shall return to civilization for supplies once a year—definitely no more often than that—but to all intents and purposes, I have forsaken forever the company of my fellowmen. Nor is it likely that I shall be plagued by visitors. The only settlement in the vicinity—the village of W——,—is located at least fifteen miles inland, and neither its inhabitants nor the husbandmen, who work the surrounding farms, are apt to take time off from their dawn-to-dusk labors to swim or fish. Further to ensure my privacy, I had all my work done by workmen and artisans from the city of B——, and saw to it that they, as well as my supplies, material, furniture and equipment, came by lake schooner rather than overland. Neither the villagers nor the husbandmen are aware of my existence.

It is my intention to spend my time climbing further out on the various branches of knowledge to which my tutor gave me access. My library is my pride and joy. I employed a printing concern to turn out personal editions of every volume in my possession, and they stand now, row upon row, on shelves scarcely newer than they are, awaiting my perusal. I anticipate, then, a life of scholarly pursuits, to be interrupted only by those tasks necessary to the maintenance of my island demesne and to the replenishment of my larder. Perhaps, if the mood strikes me, I shall write a volume or two for posthumous publication and leave the mss. in the hands of the same person to whom I have bequeathed my property—a distant cousin (distant in the sense that he lives faraway) whom I have never met and who is my only living relative. The idea of being a literary giant has always appealed to me.

The custom-manufactured clock on my study mantel is chiming midnight, and the embers in the study fireplace are growing gray. Putting my mansion in order has depleted my physical resources, and I am exhausted; therefore, I shall bring to a close this initial entry in my journal before I begin nodding over the page.

November 10th:

ONE'S INTELLECTUAL perceptions can become blunted from excessive probing; hence, I spent this afternoon not in broadening my academic horizon, but in exploring my island demesne. I knew not nearly as much about it as I had surmised, and was disconcerted, while walking along the base of the shale cliffs that comprise its southern shore, to come upon a natural cave.

I say "disconcerted" rather than "surprised" (although I experienced surprise too), because there was a quality about the high, narrow mouth that evoked an unpleasant association in my mind. While under the guidance of my tutor. I was constrained to study the Anglo-Saxon epic poem, *Beowulf*, and to render my own translation of its passages, and I fear that the ordeal has left its mark on me. For an ordeal it was. I disliked intensely the atmosphere of pessimistic gloom that pervades the crude, alliterative lines, and the monster Grendel filled me with unspeakable horror. That this horror still resides in my mind is borne out by the fact that

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

when I viewed the cave mouth I saw not the entrance to a perfectly ordinary fissure in the cliffs but the underwater entrance to Grendel's grotto, which he shared with his hideous dam.

However, I did not let my disquietude dissuade me from exploring the cave's interior. What a drear place it is, with its gray shale walls and perpetually dripping ceiling! It is much wider than its narrow entrance would lead one to believe, and extends deep into the cliffs. Truly, it *could* accommodate creatures of the fearful dimensions of Grendel and his dam, and would be a fit abode for them as well. I shall never go near it again. No Beowulf am I!

After leaving the place, I circled the rest of the way round the island, finding it, to my amazement, to be much larger than indicated by the land company's survey. The survey map shows a length of about three miles and a width of about one and a half. I am positive that these figures are grossly inaccurate and some time in the near future I am going to pace off both distances.

The weather has turned appreciably colder and I live in daily expectation of the first snowfall. I was going to write "dread", but I realized, to my delight, that I do not in the least dread the coming of winter. Why should I? At my written behest, the workmen who assisted the artisans in the construction of my mansion cut and split me a year's supply of wood; I am well-stocked with oil for my lamps; and my larder is full. No grasshopper am I, Nathaniel Worth, but the wisest and most provident of ants. Come then, fierce breath of Boreas. Swirl your white skirts, then, Old Dame Winter. Nathaniel Worth fears you not!

December 24th:

STRANGE INDEED, but until a moment ago I was unaware that tonight is Christmas Eve! A three-year old Christmas issue of *Ballou's Monthly Magazine;* included by chance in a case of books which I just got around to opening, drew aside the curtain that my severance from society had lowered before my cognizance, and let the wondrous light shine through.

But it has turned out to be not quite so wondrous a light after all. Christmas Eve is something more than a date on a calendar. It is warm firelight and heady wine and the creak of runners on hard-packed snow. It is the sound of laughter, the rosiness of cheeks—smiles, gaiety and good cheer. I have the firelight and the wine, but while the one is warm and the other heady, neither is quite enough.

But together, they will suffice. What do I want with smiles?—with gaiety and good cheer? Of what worth is a drop of kindness if it must be paid for with a pitcherful of ridicule? Let them have their precious Christmas Eves—I shall be content with mine.

But the mood lingers, despite all I can do to dispell it. The Christmas issue of *Ballou's Monthly* lies beside my journal, opened to the first page, and on the first page there is a black-and-white drawing of an attractive young lady with a spray of mistletoe in her hair. The spray is arranged so that it seems to be part of her coiffeur, and around her shoulder, another spray is arranged so that it gives the impression of being a design in her V-necked, high-collared blouse. The drawing is entitled "The Mistletoe", and illustrates a poem of the same title that begins on the next page. In common with all the literary

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

trash which such periodicals abound with, the poem is probably simplistic and sentimental, and I shall never read it. Nevertheless, I find my eyes returning again and again to the pictured young lady. Can it be that I have forgotten so soon that the likes of her are not for me, never have been and never will be? I will throw her into the fire this very moment and watch the flames blacken her loveliness, watch the ashes of her drift up into my Christmas chimney! No shadows out of the past shall be permitted to darken Nathaniel Worth's hard-won *Lebensraum*!

January 6th, 1878:

THE WINTER is becoming increasingly severe and during the past week the cold has been so intense that I have been forced to spend all of my time indoors. I find this largely to my liking; nevertheless, for the past few days a strange restlessness has afflicted me, sending me on several occasions to pacing my study floor. Perhaps, in shutting myself off from everything and everyone that would in any way bring to mind my maladjustment, I have unwittingly obviated that maladjustment and in the process undermined my motivation for being here. If this be true—if I have, indeed, put my sense of inferiority to rout—then I shall do everything possible to maintain my new *status quo*, restlessness or no restlessness. Is not the reality of anything dependent upon the presence of its opposite? Could there be coldness if there were no warmth? We say a young lady has light hair, but could she have light hair if there were no darkness to compare it to? We call a large hill a mountain, but would the distinction exist if all hills were large? If all men had been giants since the beginning of time, would there have been such a word in any of the languages? And would there be such names as "Polyphemus", "Goliath", "Ymir" and "Paul Bunyan" in folklore and religion? I submit that there would not be, and I submit further that the very existence of such names strongly suggests that their holders were of euhemeristic origin.

January 29th:

A BRIEF THAW has permitted me to pace off my island. I discovered its true length to be approximately seven miles and its true width to be approximately three and one-half—dimensions markedly at variance with those recorded by the land-company surveyor. I have altered the figures on the survey map to conform with my findings, not out of any desire to enhance the commercial value of my property, but to assuage my craving for accuracy—a craving that is as much a part of my makeup as my craving for seclusion. The commercial value of my property concerns me not at all, since I have not the slightest intention of selling it and care not one *iota* whether or not the distant cousin, into whose hands it will fall upon my demise, profits from its acquisition.

February 19th:

TWO WEEKS of sub-zero temperatures have climaxed a wintry act of betrayal begun late in December: the lake is completely frozen over—or that part of it, at least, which separates my demesne from the mainland. No longer does my tiny ship of state ride serene and inaccessible upon a watery waste, but lies locked instead in the rigid embrace of a snow-covered desert that anywond can cross with ease. It is, without doubt, a development which I should have

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

foreseen; but had I foreseen it, would there have been anything I could have done to avert it? Besides, my island was never truly inaccessible to begin with: all one ever needed to gain its shores was a small boat or a proficiency in the art of swimming. It was just that being surrounded by water gave me a sense of security. Now, that sense has departed, and, to make matters worse, the five months I have spent in my own company have made me even less desirous of coming into contact with my fellowmen than when I first arrived here. If I see a visitor approaching across the ice, I shall surely secure my shutters and lock my doors, and perhaps secret myself in the cellar till he—or she—departs.

February 26th:

FOR THREE weeks now, Old Dame Winter has been swirling her white skirts with scarcely a moment's respite, and, as I write this, the gusts of her sub-zero breath are shaking the house. I have hardly budged from my chair before the fire all day long, and I dread making the trek upstairs to my unheated tower bed-chamber. The lake, I fear, will remain frozen well into spring.

March 15th:

A SPELL of relatively warm weather has set in, and all day long the wind has been sweeping up from the south. The ice, however, has yet to reveal the faintest fissure. Still, I cannot complain: no human has yet appeared upon my horizon, and it is unlikely that one will. I was wise indeed to choose a retreat so remote from the haunts of men, although my motivation for doing so eludes me at the moment. Why did I so desperately want to be alone? What did I have to fear from creatures like myself? A glance back through my journal entries provides me with not the faintest clue. "The oppressor's wrong, the proud man's contumely, the pangs of dispriz'd love,"—are not these afflictions the lot of all of us? More confusing yet, I cannot, in retrospect, recall a single instance of any of them—and yet my determination to remain here for the rest of my life is stronger than ever. It may well be that I no longer fear or dislike my fellowmen, but it is nevertheless apparent that I want no part of them.

April 3rd:

THE VERNAL EQUINOX has long since passed, but Old Dame Winter still lingers in the land. Her days, however, are numbered: her skirts are bedraggled now, and her icy shouts few and far between. Soon, she will be gone.

Deo gratias!

April 21st:

THE SNOW is no more than a memory, but the cursed ice still remains! It is porous, and rotten to the core; but to anyone intrepid enough to essay the crossing, it could still serve as a bridge between the mainland and my island. (I am more at a loss than ever to understand my aversion to visitors. Why should I, Nathaniel Worth, of sound mind and body, dread the sight of mortals like myself?)

April 25th:

THE ICE is breaking up at last! Spring, in her infinite compassion, has at last taken pity on one, Nathaniel Worth!

April 29th:

MY EXCESSIVE brachiations in the tree of knowledge having temporarily

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

depleted my mental reserves, I decided today to begin my garden. The workmen who, at my written behest, cut and split me a year's supply of wood, also, at that same behest, cleared and spaded up a sizable plot of ground behind my mansion. I have been reworking the soil all day, and have found the task, after my winter of physical desuetude, somewhat arduous. However, I do not mind. It was good to be outdoors, watching my island come to life around me. As I worked, a large robin came and perched in the hawthorn tree by the back porch and surveyed its surroundings, no doubt with a good nesting-site in mind. It is more than welcome to take up residence wherever it chooses. No one will bother it here—not in Nathaniel Worth's demesne. Tomorrow, I am going into the woods to cut some saplings for poles, after which I am going to try my hand at birdhouse building. It will serve as an excellent hobby and make my life even more complete than it has already become.

April 30th:

I AM NOT ALONE on my island after all, nor have I been from the beginning! Goddess-tall, she stands, this giantess whom I came upon this afternoon. She is magnificent! Beautiful! No, not merely beautiful, for the very bounteousness of her beauty renders her sublime.

The cave in the cliffs would have told me of her presence, had I but examined it more closely; but no, in my irrational repugnance I confined myself to a mere cursory appraisal, and then departed posthaste. And all because of an absurd association! No Grendel she, this lean and lovely giantess—no, nor Grendel's dam!

I came upon her quite by accident when my quest for tall, straight saplings took me into the vicinity of the island's southern shore, and it was awe, rather than physical fear, that kept me from revealing myself to her. She was kneeling upon a strip of sandy beach, not far from the beginning of the cliffs, roasting a catch of lake trout over a driftwood fire. Nearby, lay a crude fishing pole of considerable length. Despite the distance between us (I had halted within the fringe of the forest), and despite the fact that she was kneeling, her great size was at once manifest to me, and I estimated her height to be about twice my own. I am six feet, two.

Her hair is bright yellow and falls in tangled tresses to her shoulders. Her eyes, as nearly as I could ascertain from such a distance, are light blue. With its rather high cheekbones and gently rounded chin, her face, for all its thinness (obviously she has been half-starving all winter while I sat basking before my fire, warm and well-fed!), is a uniquely attractive one. Her single tunic-like garment is ragged and torn, and corroborates the story of deprivation told by the hollows in her cheeks. Her feet are bare.

She devoured the trout—probably they were still half raw—without removing them from the crude spit she had fashioned. Afterward, I followed her at a discreet distance down the beach and along the base of the cliffs, and watched her slip into the dark and dismal confines of her cavern-home. Then I hurried back through the lengthening afternoon-shadows to my mansion, picking up on the way the several saplings I had cut, and began penning this entry. To think that a giantess shares my island kingdom! I can barely contain my excitement!

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

May 1st (morning):

As is my wont, whenever I am confronted by the seemingly inexplicable, I wasted no time in climbing out upon the branch of knowledge involved. My library, fortunately, is well-stocked with volumes devoted to folklore and fable, as well as to related religious material, and a single night's expenditure of midnight oil has enabled me to come up with a theory that not only explains my giantess' presence, but which throws considerable light upon the subject of giants in general. It is euhemeristic in nature, and breaks down as follows:

Imprimis. There is a race of giants inhabiting the face of the earth and their precursors were the so-called gods described in the *Younger Edda*—the giant-gods of the Asgard pantheon. Successive generations of this basic race spread throughout the whole of civilization, giving rise to the various legends with which the folklores of all countries abound, and in some cases finding their way into the major religions (e.g., the race of Rephaim, alluded to in 2 Samuel 5:18).

Secondly. This race of giants was progressively outnumbered by the various races of normal men, and as a result the giants were persecuted and forced into exile. Their size was a hindrance rather than an advantage, for it did them but little good against the vastly superior numbers of their foes, and in many cases merely succeeded in intensifying their foes' hatred. Normal men crave monsters, and tend to indulge that craving whenever they view the outsize. Burke betrays this tendency when, in *On the Sublime and Beautiful,* he says, "It is impossible to suppose a giant the object of love. When we let our imagination loose in romance, the ideas we naturally annex to that size are those of tyranny, cruelty, injustice, and everything horrid and abominable." I am disposed to believe that if there are monsters on the face of the earth, normal men alone are responsible for them. Charles Byrne is well over eight feet tall, and he is unquestionably of human origin; but are his other dimensions in proportion to his great height? Indeed they are not. He is a beanpole, not a giant—a true monster if there ever was one.

Thirdly. The descendants of the giant-gods of the Asgard pantheon were the true discoverers of America. They sailed here in some manner of seaworthy craft thousands of years before the *Pinta,* the *Niña* and the *Santa Maria* left the harbor of Palos, Spain. This is borne out in American-Indian folklore, where they are referred to by such names as *Oh-Mah, Sasquatch* and *Wendigo.*

Fourthly. Throughout history, most giants have been benevolent. Our own Paul Bunyan is an example of this sort of giant, although very little is known about his true stature because of the grossly exaggerated tales ignorant and impressionably lumberjacks have recounted concerning his legendary exploits. However, there have been malevolent giants too. Polyphemus was one. So were Grendel and Grendel's dam. Goliath was probably characterized as malevolent for the sole reason that he was on the wrong side. But malevolent or not, none of these giants, with the exception of Grendel and his dam, were monsters.

Finally. With her yellow hair and blue eyes, the young giantess whom I have discovered here on my island is a living testimony to the Scandinavian ancestry I have predicated. I do not, of course, know her exact reason for

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

living all alone in a cave, but I am sure that it is directly or indirectly related to the persecution of her people, which I have outlined above.

I can scarcely wait to make contact with her.

May 1st (afternoon):

THIS MORNING, I came upon her footprints not far from my mansion and concluded, after examining them, that she had approached the house as closely as she dared and had stood there in the darkness, gazing into my study window all the while I was burning my midnight oil! Undoubtedly, she has been aware of my presence all along, but has been afraid to reveal herself because I am normal, and hence a creature to be feared. As though she need fear me!

Following her footprints to the cave in the cliffs, I made an additional discovery: some of them were flecked with blood. A giantess with bleeding feet! For some reason, it was almost too much for me to bear, and when I came within view of the cave mouth I could hardly refrain from walking boldly up to it and calling out to her. That I did not do so can be attributed to my fear of alarming her and frightening her away. Somehow, I must contact her in such a manner as to convince her that I am no vain and boasting Beowulf, no cruel Ulysses, no merciless David; that I have no sling hidden behind my back, or fiery stake or vaunted sword.

But how?

May 1st (evening):

UNABLE ANY LONGER to endure the thought of the blood-flecked footprints and their implications, I returned this afternoon along the island's littoral to the southern shore and crept around the base of the cliffs till I obtained a good view of the cave. Crouching down behind a pile of fallen shale, I began observing the entrance, trying to peer into the interior in the hope of catching sight of its huge occupant. I maintained this uncomfortable position for about an hour without seeing any signs of life, and I was about to stand up and approach the cave openly when a Lilliputian avalanche comprised of broken shale came rattling down the cliff-face and scattered all around me. Looking upward, I found myself gazing directly into the bluest pair of eyes that I had ever seen, and I realized that all the while I had been lying there at the base of the cliff, trying to observe *her*, the giantess had been lying on the top of the cliff, observing *me*.

That the disloding of the shale had been accidental was borne out unequivocably by the expression of startlement upon her face. And yet she did not withdraw her head, as I momentarily feared she might do, but continued to look down at me as though I were as strange a phenomenon in her eyes as she was in mine. Here, then, was the opportunity I so desperately needed—the opportunity to prove to her that my intentions were amicable, and that, far from wanting to harm her, I wanted to help her. To accomplish this end, I had but a single weapon at my disposal, and I made haste to employ it to its maximum extent. I smiled at her, and into the smile I put all the warmth and the kindness and the good will that I possess.

For a long time my effort went unrewarded. Fright continued to distort her countenance, and there was a quantity of panic in her eyes that refused, at first, to disperse. At length, however, the lovely Brobdingnagian face lost some of its rigidity, the blue

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

eyes some of their fear, and the smile that presently broke forth upon her lips was as warm and friendly as the sun coming up over a hill, and filled with a wistfulness so poignant that it wrenched my heart.

Without taking my eyes from her face, I arose to my feet, moving slowly so as not to alarm her, and called up to her in the gentlest tone of voice I could manage. "Please don't be frightened," I said. "I mean you no harm. My name is Nathaniel Worth and I wish to help you."

I was not surprised when my words evoked not the slightest glimmer of understanding in her blue eyes. Living as she had all her life as far from the haunts of normal humans as possible, she could hardly be expected to be familiar with the English language, and probably knew only the language of the giants. This assumption was strengthened, if not actually substantiated, when, at length, she uttered several words which I was certain were related to one of the Scandinavian tongues. Being unversed in any of them, however, I found her words as unintelligible as she had found mine, and oral communication between us ceased before it had even begun.

Undaunted, I resorted to the universal language of signs, managing, by means of a series of rather strenuous gesticulations, to make her understand that I wished her to proceed back along the top of the cliffs and meet me on the beach. She appeared undecided for a moment, and the panic that had so recently departed from her eyes, returned. Presently, however, it went away again, and she nodded, and withdrew her head.

I cannot describe the medley of emotions that beset me as I made my way back along the base of the cliffs toward that memorable rendezvous. That fear was a major ingredient, I cannot deny, for, despite my stanch conviction that the malevolence of giants has been unjustifiably imputed to them my lesser mortals, I could not quell the atavistic dread of the outsize that mounted within me with every step I took. Nor can I describe the entirely different medley of emotions that overwhelmed me when, rounding the last shale shoulder of the cliffs, I saw her standing on the beach less than a dozen feet away. I know only that my fear transmuted once and for all to awe, and that for many moments I could not move from the spot where my suddenly paralyzed legs had stranded me.

Hugeness viewed from a distance differs from hugeness viewed at close range. Size is relative, and cannot be fully appreciated without a nearby familiar object to use as a criterion. In this case, the familiar object was one which by its very nature was best calculated to give me maximum awareness of the diverse dimensions involved: my own body.

As I stated earlier, I am six feet, two inches in height—a giant in my own right; and yet this giantess towers over me not by merely twice my height, but by twice my height *and almost half again besides*! Fully fifteen feet tall, she stands, and every part of her—every line, every curve, every hollow—is in exquisite proportion to her stature. Her legs, colossal columns though they may be in one sense, are the legs of a young and lovely girl; her arms, for all her undernourishment, possess an almost Grecian symmetry; her breasts are lofty, landscaped hills upon the burgeoning countryside of her body; while her neck is a gleaming white pillar round which float cloud-like

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tresses of her yellow hair and above which flowers the blue-eyed beauty of her Brobdingnagian face.

How long I stood there unmoving, I do not know. Perhaps I would be standing there yet, had not the panic come back into her eyes and jarred me out of my paralysis. Recovering myself, I smiled up at her reassuringly, and the smile she gave me in return was even warmer than her first had been, and its wistfulness even more acute. It was the sort of smile you see upon the lips of a forsaken child—a smile that simultaneously proffers friendship and begs friendship in return. It told me what I had to do. "Come with me," I said, and, stepping forward, reached up and took her hand.

I led her along the beach and thence into the grove of hawthorn trees where my mansion stands. She accompanied me like a docile little girl. Upon setting eyes upon the house (probably the first time she had viewed it in daylight), she gasped, and, again like a little girl—an enchanted one, this time—pressed both hands against her breast.

Throughout our walk, I had been concentrating on the problem which accommodating so huge a creature in so relatively small a dwelling presented, and had arrived finally at the only solution. Indicating that I wished her to remain where she was, I went inside, and, after proceeding directly to the drawing room, shoved all the furniture it contained into the library. Next, I made several trips upstairs and brought down all my extra mattresses and bedding, after which I made a bed for her upon the drawing-room floor. This task completed to my satisfaction, I opened the front door and beckoned to her to come inside.

Fortunately, my ceilings are high, my halls and doorways wide. She had considerable difficulty gaining the drawing room, of course—I had expected that—but with practice she will be able to get in and out of it with ease; and, while its height does not permit her to stand up straight, its length and width are more than ample for her to move about and to stretch out full-length upon her bed. And she will never be cold: I shall see to it that on chill nights there is always a fire burning in the drawing-room fireplace, and, as soon as I find the time, I am going to sew some of the blankets which I gave her into a master blanket with which she can cover herself. Certainly, her new quarters are vastly superior to the dark and dismal cave in which she has been shivering for God knows how long, and certainly, the warm meal that I prepared for her excelled by far the primitive fare to which she has been accustomed. She must have been half-starved, poor thing, judging from the way she wolfed the food down. Fortunately, I have a large platter which makes an adequate plate for her to eat from; my largest cup, however, is hardly more than a thimble in her huge hand, while my eating utensils are useless to her.

She is resting now as I write this in my study, and her breathing is a soft summer wind in the next room. Before she lay down, I heated water for her so that she could soak her cut and bleeding feet, and I confess that carrying in the wooden tub—the largest in my possession—and then filling it, pailful by pailful, has worn me out. But I do not mind. Indeed, I find it somehow exhilarating to wait upon so magnificent a creature, and the almost dog-like gratitude that comes into her eyes each time she looks at me is a far

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

greater reward than any I have ever received for services rendered in the past. In addition to the cuts upon her feet, there are numerous deep scratches on her arms and shoulders—put there, probably, by the cruel thorns of the hawthorn trees. What a terrible world this is, where giants must hide themselves from the sight of normal men and suffer in drafty caves and hostile forests! I shall never condone it—never!

The summer wind sighs in the next room, grows softer. She sleeps—my little-girl giantess sleeps.

May 8th:

HER NAME is Frederika. I have shortened it to Erika.

She has grown more beautiful since I have taken her in. Good food has filled out the hollows in her cheeks and set roses to blooming in their stead. Kindness has driven away—forever, I hope—the fear that once resided in her eyes. The scratches on her arms and shoulders still linger, but her feet have healed completely (though what to do about shoes for her is a problem that dismays me). When she walks now, there is a queenly majesty about her, and her tread, once timid, is now firm and purposeful.

We go walking together often, when my studies and her sewing permit (she has fashioned herself a delightful tunic out of a spare pair of hangings to replace her old one), and sometimes I take her hand and sometimes she takes mine, and we breast hills side by side and share each new vista that bursts upon us. Occasionally, she forgets to match her pace with mine, and I find myself being half-dragged alone at her side; then she will remember, and laugh tenderly down at me, after which she will walk so slowly that even I could outdistance her if I so desired.

I am more fearful now of visitors than I was before. The reason behind my original fear is buried somewhere in the hinterlands of my mind; now, I fear because of her. Were my fellowmen ever to learn of her presence here on the island, she would have to seek out another sanctuary and I might never see her again. This, I do not believe I could endure. I have made it as clear to her as the language of signs permits that, should she see a boat approaching, she must hide, and I am sure she understands. In all probability, her natural instincts would cause her to hide anyway; but there is no way for me to keep the lake under constant surveillance, hence either of us can be caught unawares at any time.

I have been trying to teach her English, but thus far I have made not the slightest progress. Perhaps I shall have to give up and learn her tongue instead, if I can persuade her to teach it to me. In any event, I am not particularly concerned: a communication seems to exist between us that transcends all ordinary forms—a communication compounded of a reciprocity of feelings, of likes and dislikes, of hopes and fears. A most remarkable rapport. It is there each time our eyes meet, each time there is a touching of our hands; each time a bird of unusual hue rises out of the brush before us, or a ray of sunlight slants a certain way through an unpremeditated pattern of branches and trees.

I have never known a spring as sweet as this one. Mayflowers vie with one another in their efforts to give off the headiest fragrance and to adorn themselves in the pleasantest possible colors. The buds on the trees seem eager to burst forth and take over their duties as leaves. The sun

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

seems anxious to warm the land, and the rain, when it comes in the night, falls gently upon the face of the earth, as though reluctant to risk injuring a single blade of grass or a single meadowflower.

It is night and it is raining now, and the rain is a gentle susurrus in the hawthorn tree without my study window. In the next room, Erika lies contentedly upon the bed I have made for her, secure in the room which I have assured her is her very own. She is looking at the illustrations in one of my encyclopaedia sets, and although I cannot see her eyes, I know that they are wide with wonderment. What is this new quality that pervades the house and enriches the very air I breathe—this quality compounded of warmth and wantedness, of tenderness and peace? Whence came it? Why? It does not matter. It is enough that it is here.

May 11th:

OUR WALKS CONTINUE, and I sense an awakening in my young giantess, a coming into being of emotions she has never known before. All day long, lines from Baudelaire's *La Géante* have kept running through my mind.:

Du temps que la Nature en sa verve puissante
Concevait chaque jour des enfants monstrueux,
J'eusse aimé vivre auprès d'une géante,
Comme aux pieds d'une reine un chat voluptueux.

J'eusse aimé voir son corps fleurir avec son âme
Et grandir librement dans ses terribles jeux,
Deviner si son coeur couve une sombre flamme
Aux humides brouillards qui nagent dans ses yeux—

She is glorious, my *géante*! The spring sun has caressed her creamy skin and given it tones of gold. A comelier hue than the sun itself is her lustrous yellow hair. When she runs and plays, it dances about her face in bright abandon, and when the wind is brisk, it sometimes streams straight out behind her. Gaiety has taken up permanent residence in her blue eyes and makes them sparkle like a starlit summer sea. I do not believe that in all my life I have ever seen anyone quite so happy or so carefree.

My own happiness is less effervescent in nature. It pervades me like a warm ray of sunlight, glowing quietly throughout my entire being and turning the most prosaic of happenings into moments of wonder and delight. Until I met Erika, I did not know that such moments could exist; but then, I had never been in love before, or, if I had, had never had my love returned.

Yes, I love Erika, and Erika loves me. I can see her love kindling in her eyes each time she looks at me. I can feel it in the touch of her hand, sense it in the way she walks when she knows that I am watching. But our love for one another has in it none of the passion ordinarily present in such relationships. It has the tenderness, yes, and the affection and the concern; but it is on a much more exalted plane than the purely physical, perhaps because of our mutual knowledge that it could not otherwise endure. This, I do not know. I only know that our love exists, and that is all I need to know.

We still "converse" in the universal language of signs. My language seems to be beyond her powers to master, while hers—why, I do not know—

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

eludes me utterly. Perhaps I do not want to learn it; perhaps I want our relationship to remain exactly the way it is. Half of loving someone lies in not knowing everything there is to know about her. Knowing everything there is to know about someone often ushers in disillusionment, just as physical intimacy often ushers in carnality. I have kissed my *géante* many times upon the cheek, and she has kissed me many times on mine; but we do not know each other's lips.

May 22nd:

IN MY ABSORPTION with Erika, I had forgotten my garden completely, and it was only when I saw her in it this morning, working the soil with a spade, which in her giantess-hands seemed toy-like, that I remembered. I went out and worked beside her, and now—thanks to our combined efforts (hers Herculean, mine on a much smaller scale)—we will be able to begin planting tomorrow. So there will be a crop after all—a small one, perhaps, but enough of a one to augment our provisions sufficiently to see us through the winter. I had hoped, also, to augment them by felling some of the small game with which the islands abounds, but discovered to my dismay that I have mislaid the only firearm I brought with me—an excellent Morsè magazine rifle. Well, there is nothing for it, I suppose; in any case, I do not intend to return to civilization for supplies till next spring. By then, perhaps, I will have devised some means of snaring enough small game to round out our diet, although we must go sparingly on such items as salt and sugar and flour. Yes, it is still with me—this fear of my fellowmen. I had thought it gone, but it is not. It is present in Erika too, and to a much greater degree: I can tell from the look that sometimes comes into her eyes when she gazes across the water to the mainland. But in her such an attitude is understandable. She has reason to fear my fellowmen. I have not.

June 9th:

THE LAKE has warmed to such an extent that bathing in it is now possible, and during the last few days Erika and I have been trying our hand at swimming. She is as inept in the science as I am, and we have spent many a merry hour laughing uproariously at each other's awkward efforts, rendered the more awkward by our heavy underclothing. When we tire of our pastimé, we come out of the water and lie down side by side on the beach and let the therapeutic sunlight lull us to sleep. Each time, I am reminded of the closing lines of Baudelaire's wistful reverie—

Et parfois en été quand les soleils malsains,

Lasse, la font s'étendre à travers la campagne,
Dormir nonchalamment à l'ombre de ses seins,
Comme un hameau paisible au pied d'une montagne–

And each time I am, indeed, "a quiet village sleeping at the foot of a hill".

June 11th:

Then by headlands afroth with foam,
Came Grendel with monstrous mien,
Eager once more his blood-thirst to slake
In Hrothgar's antlered hall—

I CAN THINK of no better way to describe the coming of this blond and bearded giant who has invaded our island than by recourse to my own

(cont. on page 112)

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Godwin, who made his debut in these pages with "The Lady of Finnigan's Hearth" (September, 1977), returns with another story to delight admirers of his first. Herein we meet a young girl whose head is filled with the romantic legends of the faerie—and discover what befalls her when her wishes are granted at the end of—

THE LAST RAINBOW

PARKE GODWIN

ILLUSTRATED by JOE STATON

THE LEGEND goes something like this:

Once upon a time a princess caught a faerie, one of the little folk, and demanded his treasure, since it was well known that all faeries had fabulous wealth hidden under some hill and were legend-bound to render it on request. The faerie reluctantly waved his hand, the hill opened up, and there was the treasure, its dazzle rivaling the sunlight. But, according to tradition, the little folk always ask something in return. . .

Thus the legend. The truth is more fun.

Once upon a time there was a girl named Brangaene . . . but 'once' is vague; we can be more specific. It was rather well on in the middle ages, late enough for dragons and quests to be quite passé, late enough for Brangaene to be literate and even overread in that narrow, romantic field. She was the daughter of a harried baron who held a very small castle in a very small and agriculturally uninspired corner of England. His liege lord was both an earl and a bishop, which meant the earl could demand his secular rights and, if not forthcoming, the bishop could close the gates of heaven.

Such was the case one spring when Brangaene was fifteen. The earl had declared war on a neighboring tenant and ordered Brangaene's father to send help or money. Since the baron depended heavily on his neighbor's grain mill, had no money and not enough men to populate a decent garden party, he declined with apologies.

The earl bishop thundered and threatened excommunication. The poor baron was in up to his neck, and since his life had gone much this way for a long time, his temper was understandably short.

Brangaene longed to be of help, but the bishop was only peripheral to her enchanted world. She hunted for unicorns in the forest beyond their moat, nosed for faeries on moonlit nights, and though she never found either, her faith was undented by fail-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ure. As pure and good a man as Lancelot hunted the grail, and Percival even saw it. More than one historical knight had slain a dragon or a giant; it said so in her books. Unicorns might be scarce and shy, but scarce was not nonexistent. Faeries might be elusive—

"But so are foxes," she reasoned, turning to canonical precedent. If bushes could burn, seas part, tombstones roll aside and the dead rise, this fortuitous by-pass of natural law could not logically be confined to the middle east. So her catechism and belief. The unicorns would come, white and willing, the little folk would be caught, their treasure demanded. Faith would be rewarded.

"I mean, father, we only have to look for them."

"Ye gods," the baron brooded over his soup, the bishop's tyranny, and his daughter's mind. "What have I done to deserve this?"

Brangaene looked like her mother. This did not endear her to him. That pious woman had departed the world leaving behind an unfinished tapestry on the life of St. Paul and, as his enduring penance for marrying a Celt, this unworldly, star-eyed, faerie-chasing wisp of a girl. Her marriage value declined with his own fortunes. Once he might have bargained for a prince or duke-ling, later a baron's son or even a plain knight. Now as he watched Brangaene running through the garden and tripping over her own dainty feet, he longed for a decent kidnapping.

She was forever racing up the steps with the news of (maybe) unicorns sighted across the moat, or (they looked like) faerie-folk peeping from behind trees in the forest. He tolerated this until her twelfth birthday and then announced his incredulity

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

by kicking her down the stairs. As Brangaene persisted in her optimism, his placekick and her nimbleness improved with time. She was even able to gauge her father's temper by the manner and sound of the kick. Mild irritation: side of the foot, a flat *bup!* Genuine wrath: point of the toe and swung from the hip with a resounding *poonk!* And as she became airborne, floating down toward the scullery, Brangaene meditated on the treasures and principles of her own, private, shining and utterly undeniable world. She was an unusual child.

Though her latest idea was truly inspired, Brangaene couldn't have chosen a worse day to break it to the baron. They were at dinner in the hall. the dogs rooting in the rushes for scraps and the baron dipping his bread in the soup and wishing it was the bishop's innards. That worthy had made good his threat. The baron was now excommunicate. The clerk in his soul quailed at the red tape involved: audiences with the archbishop, letters to the king and even to Rome, all for reconciliation with the earl bishop, might he, strangle in his own *pallium.* Heaven aside, the re-elevation from goat to lamb would cost a bundle.

"But, father," Brangaene pushed her bowl away and went on earnestly, "that's my plan. We'll give the bishop and the Church the greatest treasure they could wish. No, not the bishop, he's too small. We'll *allow* him to take it to Rome, and the Pope himself will reward you, and the king will make you an earl."

"And what had you in mind to present to His Holiness?" asked the baron with deceptive patience.

"Such a treasure," she bubbled. "I thought of it as I was reading in the garden. The holy grail, father."

The baron sighed. "Oh yes, the holy grail." He dropped his bread in the soup where it sank like the rest of his luck. "You've seen it lately?"

"No one has seen it since Sir Percival."

"Some centuries back, I gather, and somehow mislaid since then."

"All we have to do is find it," she asserted. "The faerie have it without doubt—they steal everything. And today I found little footprints smaller than my own in the woods across the moat. I'll take the dogs and trap them, and say 'caught caught caught' three times for the charm, and—"

Thoughtfully the baron laid aside his spoon. Pensively he rose, tenderly he guided his only-begotten child to the head of the stairs. Brangaene knew what was coming, but she was finished eating anyway.

Poonk! went the baron's full-inspired toe.

But Brangaene dreamed as she flew, and her dreams were not to be denied.

FROM THE FOREST, the two small men in worn green tunics contemplated the unimpressive castle. Wary, dark and sharp-featured, they were accomplished thieves, and their present disagreement over method was conducted in a dialect ancient when the first druids came to wild Britain.

Malgon, slightly the elder, held that the small keep was poor pickings: best steal two horses and be gone. Young Drust thought it shrewder to ask for a meal at the scullery door, tell a fortune or two, and filch from within. They strolled back into the copse that had sheltered them since yesterday and considered it.

"Yon's a starveling lord," Malgon guessed. "If a's got a horse, steal it now before a has to eat it himself."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Drust stretched out on the soft, marshy turf, grinning up at him. "Thee's so fond of sleeping on rock, will pass up soft straw?"

"I want my own bed," Malgon wished disconsolately.

"And I. How many days to home, Malgon?"

"Four, five, an thy mother's not moved our tents."

"Hast counted the time since we left her? A full year."

"The leaving was thy madness, not mine."

Arms behind his head, Drust squinted up at the sunlight filtering through the treetops. "But hast not traveled? Hast not seen armies and great battles and the lords of the tallfolk and learned their speech? Hast not thieved in glorious and honorable fashion for a year?"

Malgon snorted. "Hast not *worked* as well?"

"Aye, true," Drust admitted with a tinge of shame. "Too often hast been reduced to that. We'll not tell my mother."

Their kind did not mingle much with the tallfolk of the valleys and towns. They were upland dwellers, following their cattle and goats where the grazing led them, as their folk had done since the first of them tracked the reindeer when the land was half ice. Then the tallfolk had come with their bronze swords and their planted fields, taking the best lands, forcing the faerie ever further into the hills and heaths. They never planted grain like the bigger folk; if they had, how could they follow the herds? In hard times—and times were very hard now—they hung about the edges of the towns or hovered like Drust and Malgon about the two-penny barons' wars, and over the ages an unspoken contract grew up between faerie and tallfolk based on mutual distrust and fear. The tallfolk came to Drust's people for their magic and their gaiety, and even married them sometimes, though this was rare.

It was taken for granted that they stole as a way of life, but worked well when necessity drove them to it. Drust and Malgon could mend anything from harness to boots and clothing with a lasting skill denied bigger hands. Knowing their shyness, the work was left outside at night with a few coins or a little food carelessly placed about so that the bit of paid work could seem the whim of the little folk and the coins honorably filched. It paid to be on good terms with the faerie. The cattle blight that they could cure, they could bring again. They had the magic.

And they *were* small. They lacked the crossbreeding and the grain diet that lengthened the lowlanders' bones, but already legend and fireside tale were shrinking them further into Lilliputian creatures with shining wings, and *faerie* no longer meant what it had. They were men, but few and fading out, fading into the hills and fanciful stories. There was little left of their magic but the tallfolk's dread of it. If Drust had learned anything in the year away from his mother's tents, it was this.

He turned to face his friend, "Malgon, I think—"

A dry stick cracked nearby; his head swiveled around, and then down into the copse poured a conquering avalanche of three men-at-arms, four huge dogs, and a blonde girl yipping with delight.

"Caught!" she bounded at them. "Caught—" She tripped over a root and went down spectacularly as a fallen empire in a puddle. Undismayed, she leaped up muddy but victorious.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Caught! Three times is the charm, and you must yield to me or my men will chop you up and the dogs will eat you."

Drust and Malgon considered; there seemed no future in the bagueries of courage. The guards were shabby but armed, and the lean dogs of most uncertain benevolence.

"Yours, lady," Drust acceded in English.

She held onto him, not sure he wouldn't vanish if she let go. "You're faerie folk?"

"Aye, but—"

"And have the magic and yield it to my service?"

Drust glanced at the undernourished dogs. "My God, yes."

"Including all hidden treasures—"

"Well, there's sixpence in my—"

"And the whereabouts of dragons to be slain?"

"What's a dragon?"

"Be large and scaly, I think," Malgon ventured, "and dost fly."

Brangaene's free hand clamped on his arm. "Then you have seen them?"

"Not this far north," Malgon hedged. *Aargh*, snarled the largest dog, and Malgon shut up.

"No," said Brangaene, "you must uncover every lair, every trove of treasure, and grant me three wishes, or one at least, and if I just get one, it's going to be a crusher, and then," she paused for breath, "you must recommend my good fortune to the Queen of Faerie and bring me the holy grail."

She released them and waited, as it were, for wonders.

"A's mad," Malgon trembled. "Speak gently, Drust. Thee has the better English."

"Lady," Drust began, "it's true we're faerie and do a bit of trading, but—"

"But you will do magic?" Brangaene prompted.

Some of his composure regained, Drust managed a feeble smile. Even if Brangaene were an inch taller than he, her eyes were not difficult to look into, and he had seen very few blonde women.

"Not before dinner, lady."

"Of course, of course." She turned, gesturing to the guards. "To the hall. Our plans are perilous and there's not much time. Away!"

"Truly a sweet lass," Drust whispered as they were trundled toward the bailey bridge over the moat. "Such golden hair. None of our girls have golden hair."

"Dost cleverly hide the shape of her skull," Malgon hissed. "And but for that, would swear a was dropped on her soft little head at birth. Oh, if thy mother could see thee now: taken by a mad girl—"

"And three men."

"—It retches me!"

"And four dogs, very large."

"Aye, and four dogs," Malgon glanced apprehensively at the drolling of the nearest hound, "and unreasonable at that."

They were hustled over the bridge, across the bailey and up the steps to the hall, Brangaene urging them on. "Hurry! Hurry!"

IF PRUDENCE were Brangaene's long suit, she would not have disturbed her father just then. The baron had few good days, but this one was a negative gem. The earl bishop had descended on his delinquent neighbor, seized his lands, including the all-important mill, and now perched only two hours away to chastise the baron for his breach of fealty. Thus, his beleagured lordship was not only excommunicate, he was techni-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

cally under siege. Prices were going up.

"I can promise God," the baron moaned to Rainier, his steward, "but the bishop wants cash. Bishop hell, he's a broker! I've got to buy him off when I couldn't afford his horse."

Rainier tried to be helpful. "Is there a crusade forming?"

"We lost the last two."

"Perhaps a pilgrimage to the Holy Land."

"Full of sand flies and Arabs selling pieces of the Cross. Rainier, we're sunk."

Voices, thumping feet, a skittering of hounds and then the stairwell erupted with Brangaene and her guards, four baying hounds and two rather stunted strangers. Caught up in the excitement, the dogs careered about, slipping on the rushes, *owoo*-ing in a frantic quartet until Rainier booted them into silence. The baron fixed his daughter with a dangerous eye.

"What is this?"

Brangaene's eyes shone. "Father! Guess what I have!"

"Bad manners and mud in your hair."

"I fell down."

"Again? I ought to put you on wheels."

"But I found them!" She tugged Drust and Malgon forward by their wrists, presenting them with a flourish. "They're ours."

Her father studies the two prisoners. "Indeed?"

Drust assayed a tentative smile. "How do you, sir?"

"Miserably, and shut up. Brangaene, your eye for value seems keener than my own. Found what?"

"The little folk."

"Their lack of height is apparent."

"But they're faerie!"

The baron looked again. They did not improve with definition. "These two . . . rabbit-droppings?"

Brangaene nodded, jubilant. "And they've been charged to give up their treasures and three wishes and find the grail as I told you."

Her father turned away, suffering. "Ye gods."

"They look like thieves," Rainier judged. "What are they doing so close to the keep?"

Drust spoke up. "Just trying to get home, sir. We stole nothing from you."

"Which I take not as innocence but oversight," said the baron. "I ought to hang you—"

"That would be nice," said Rainier.

"—But I'm at war and very busy. Brangaene, you and your treasures will accompany me to the head of the stairs."

She winced. "The *side* of the foot, father. They're really quite nice."

"Of course." he prodded Drust forward. "Come along now—no, wait. What's this?"

He fingered at the neck of Drust's tunic, opened it and extracted a heavy gold chain. From it, winking in the light, dangled a fair-sized emerald. Drust's hand caught his.

"That's mine. My mother gave it me."

"Where would your mother get a chain like that? Look, Rainier. Worth a war horse at least."

Brangaene clapped her hands. "I knew it. I knew it."

Drust held on. "My mother gave it me."

"And who's she?" the baron demanded.

"Why, Queen Olwen," said Malgon.

The baron's eyebrows rose. "Who?"

"Queen of Faerie," Malgon strug-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

gled imperfectly with English "Hast not stolen them; did give me one, too." He opened his tunic. "See?"

Rainier examined the rich chains and the undeniably precious stones. "This is not English work, my lord. Nor French or German, nor any I can recognize. Extremely antique."

The baron was a practical man, not given to unexamined belief; practical, but in deep trouble. And he had eyes. He turned to Drust. "I've heard those treasure stories from every passing witch and gypsy all my life. Are they true, then?"

"Remember my wishes," Brangaene jiggled urgently. "Oh, please, please, we need them so much."

The two little men looked at the floor and were silent. Then Drust spoke quietly. "Take the chains, but let us go."

"Oh, no," the baron decided. "No, that was hasty. Rainier, deposit my guests in the tower room, it has a workable lock. Golden geese, you're laying in *my* barnyard now."

STANDING TIPTOE on a stool, Drust viewed the bustling bailey fifty feet below. The bars were meant to constrain larger men; they might wriggle through, but the drop would be terminal. No way out.

"There must be," said Drust.

Malgon hugged his knees on the straw pallet. "Thee's the fleet mind among us. Tell me how."

"By wit and wile. Am I Olwen's son for nothing?"

"Hast not heart? Thee's the property of that great, scowling man, the golden goose to drop eggs like breadcrumbs. And must not forget the mad lass with a's caught-caught-caught and the wishes and the grails." Malgon threw up his hands. "A thinks we're a mill for magic."

Drust studied him with a slow, thoughtful smile. "Then will be one. The great baron wants treasure—"

Malgon's eyes flashed a stern warning. "Impossible."

"Just so," Drust nodded, "and therefore. . ."

They heard footsteps on the stone steps beyond their cell. A key groaned in the lock, then the door swung back and Brangaene hurried in with a tray. Two guards waited at the door. She placed the tray on a stool and closed the heavy door. The faerie men inspected their dinner: two apples, two slices of black bread, but only one bowl of leek and barley soup.

"There were two," Brangaene explained, "but I dropped one."

"Did guess." Malgon fell hungrily to the bread and apples. Brangaene noticed how he offered the soup first to Drust. Clearly this was Queen Olwen's son, a genuine fairie prince, and her luck was almost as great as her imminent need. The bishop would not be put off.

"You must give me my wishes very soon."

Drust spooned the soup, careful to leave half for Malgon. "Oh yes, the treasure."

"And the grail."

"That's two."

Brangaene blinked. "Don't I get three?"

"Magic's hard, lady, and treasure's rare. There's the bargaining yet." Drust laid down the spoon and offered the bowl to Malgon without taking his eyes from Brangaene. "For a treasure, I'll ask value in return."

Brangaene gazed back at him, and suddenly found it a little hard to breathe. She ascribed it to his magic aura—and let that suffice for an answer. Inexperienced as she was, her

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

glands worked very well, thank you, and Drust was something new. She had never seen hair so sleekly black or eyes so dark, or a male figure, though diminutive, so perfectly formed. He was her gleaming opposite; and the attractive force of that juxtaposition is magic of a very palpable cast. No man had ever looked at her quite like that before, especially one who came so close and took both of her hands.

"It won't be easy, Brangaene. It will take time."

"We don't have time!' she sailed. "The earl bishop is coming, and he'll want just buckets of money."

"The road itself is hard to find, the road of the gods."

"We're in trouble with God, too. Father's excommunicated." Brangaene fluttered to the door. "There's no time for roads. You must wave your hand and make the hill open. Forget the dragons, father doesn't hunt much anyway. Just one treasure, just a small one, and the holy grail. You're bound to do it. The books said."

"What books?" Malgon wondered.

"All of them," she said. "The tales of faerie."

Malgon bit into his apple. "Was't *writ* by faerie?"

"Well, no, but—"

"Did think not. Lies."

Drust frowned. "Peace, Malgon."

"It . . . *can't* be a lie," Brangaene said in a small voice.

Malgon chewed placidly. "Why not?"

"Because—because I need it so much. Because I've searched for you all my life."

"Yes," said Drust. "I see that."

"It *is* true . . . isn't it, Drust?"

Drust glanced once at Malgon. "Tell your father we will bargain."

The color came back to her cheeks. "Oh, yes!"

"And bargain has two sides."

"Yes, yes," Brangaene flung open the door and plunged out. "And quickly, because the bishop—" She tripped over a guard's pike and went flying. Malgon winced.

The footsteps died away, the apparently unbreakable Brangaene in the van. "Hurry! Hurry!"

Malgon sighed. "Now thee's done it. Nay, don't cock thy brow or frown at me who swore to look after the queen's only son. A will whip me from her tent! And thee's no better than tallfolk with the mooning at yellow hair and watery blue eyes. 'May leave out the dragons. Just a small treasure and the grail', a says. Ha! What'll thee give little Sure-Foot and her greedy da but the lone, lorn sixpence between us?"

But Drust grinned from ear to ear. He threw himself down on the straw, glowing with satisfaction. "An impossible bargain, Mal: what I can't give for what the baron won't give up."

His mother's guess at the high birthrate of fools—one a minute—was rather informed, Drust realized. There were not one but two keys to their freedom, the baron's greed and the girl's belief.

Malgon was sceptical. "What won't a give up?"

"Brangaene."

With Adam's innocence, he bit lustily into his apple. As with Adam, it was only the prelude to his enlightenment.

THE POLITICAL AXIOM of the times was 'every man must have a lord'—which is to say that no matter how big you were, someone had your number. Someone very definitely had the bishop's.

"Lord, hear thy servant in his

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

hour of need!"

By the altar of a small, roadside chapel, the earl bishop prayed very earnestly. He had attached the goods of one baron, his men waited outside amid the snorting of horses and the clank of mail to do the same thing to Brangaene's father, and all out of necessity. The earl bishop was in the same trouble as the baron, but larger.

By chance he was related to the king; by misfortune he was ambitious, since it led him to accept his bishopric from his royal cousin. The king thought it sound policy, in view of Rome's persuasive power, to have a bishop or two he could count on. Unfortunately, the bishop accepted his *pallium* of office from the crown and didn't wait, as was customary, to have one blessed and sent from Rome. This political oversight has filled volumes; suffice to say His Holiness took umbrage and a flurry of letters coursed between the crown, the bishop and the Vatican. When the diplomatic smoke cleared away, the bishop was regarded as unreliable in London, quite temporary in Rome, and had to decide which to placate first.

He prayed now for guidance with honest intensity. Truly conscientious, even dogmatic, in his holy office, he was less intelligent than shrewd and above all less fervent than superstitious. He could always feel the heat of hell and was not about to fan the flames. The king was a mere relative; he could wait. To pay Peter, Paul would be cheerfully robbed. The gift must be large and of noble intent, one grand gesture of faith.

He and Brangaene had more in common than either realized.

The earl bishop crossed himself, rose and strode out to take his horse from the groom. He mounted in a rattling of mail and an aura of sanctity.

"Quickly on. We'll raise his keep before vespers."

IT WAS LATE AFTERNOON and rather warm for April when the baron came into the hall carrying the two gold chains. Drust waited by the trestle table guarded by one man, all the baron could spare from the gates and watch towers. The baron dropped the chains on the table, sat and poured wine into a silver cup.

"Brangaene says you're willing to bargain for your freedom."

Drust sat and indicated the wine. "May I?"

"Please do. Tell me, how much are you prepared to pay?"

Drust sampled the wine pleasurably. "How much will you ask?"

"A heap, little man. The lot, the bundle. Where is it?"

"Oh now, now, sir. That's not how it's done. The cup of wine begins the bargaining. Aye, there's treasure, but the way to it is a matter of when, not where."

The baron picked up the gold chains; the emeralds flashed in the light. "Did these come from that horde?"

Drust sipped his wine dreamily. "Mother always liked those. The stones are like the green of wild Britain when we first found it. And the gold—is there any color goes so well with green as gold? Like sunlight it is. But when you talk money to us, you talk of wives and cattle and goats. These we value, these bring children and make food. We love gold only because it's so pretty."

"And yet you steal it."

"A hard word, sir. Very hard. We were the first men in Britain, and the land belongs to us. We only charge you rent."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The baron choked on his wine. "You want?"

"My lord taxes his own tenants, doesn't he, for the use of the land? The earl bishop charges you, the great king takes from him. A clear logic."

Drily, the baron asked, "What do you charge the king?"

"Mother's rates go up for him. For you, we will be reasonable."

"That's gracious for a man who has no choice. Now, this treasure. How much is there?"

"Your wine is lovely." Drust settled back in the chair, helping himself to more. "How much? That's hard to say. And the road of the gods . . . not where it is, but when. This is April, a fortnight yet to Beltane-fire—aye, could be soon, could be. But your king strikes his coin in silver, and we don't deal in that."

The baron frowned. "You don't?"

"Oh, a wee bit," Drust shrugged, "the larger pieces. It's not pretty as gold. Must think in silver weight; let me see. Fifty . . . sixty . . . aye, the chest of pearls, large ones only . . . perhaps eighty—"

His host blinked. "Pearls?"

Drust's brow furrowed in concentration. "Eighty-five . . ."

"Eighti-five *what*, damn it!"

"No, there's the rubies. I always forget them."

"You forgot—"

"We don't like red. It's the color of rage. That makes ninety . . . and some trifles, cups, ewers and jewelled plate that mother holds dear for the charm of them. Yes," Drust set down his cup. "Near a hundred thousand marks of silver."

Luckily, the baron's cup was empty, because he dropped it. He gasped. "A—hundred—thousand—"

"Oh, and the grail," Drust snapped his fingers. "Lady Brangaene asked for it."

The baron was still stunned. "Part of the . . . rent, I take it."

"Collected from Glastonbury church by mother's own ancestor these thousand years gone. The grail, the Cup of the Last Supper. Mother calls it her Jerusalem Cup. She may not wish to part with that."

The baron found his aplomb. "Quite, quite. Now, as to delivery—"

"But my lord, there's my bargain."

"Well, what is it? What do you want?" A good question. If the gold chains were only appetizer to a hundred thousand marks of silver, what could he toss in to humor this improbable pixie?

Drust picked up a candlestick, admiring the workmanship. When he spoke, his voice was gentle with an old sorrow. "Bronze: we learned from the first tallfolk how to make it, and that gave us swords to match theirs. Then others came with the iron we couldn't make or match. We don't like iron. But gold is beautiful, and beauty is what we love. Will you give me one thing with gold in it, even a little, for trade?"

"Done," said the baron.

"And if you fail me, your fields will blight and your cattle perish."

"Done. And if you cheat me—well, *media vita in morte sumus*. In the midst of life, eh? You're rather young to die."

Drust rose and gravely placed his small hand in the baron's. "Done for the third time and the charm. I want your daughter Brangaene for my wife."

The baron dropped his cup again—full, this time. "What?"

"Just that, sir. Not a jot more, not a hair less."

The baron began to chuckle, then

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

to roar with it. Even the guard laughed. "My daughter marry *you*? I'll die laughing."

"Laughing and poor, alas." Drust rose. "Since there's no bargain—"

"Wait a minute!" The baron pushed him down again. "In the midst of life, remember? Ever see a man hanged, drawn and quartered?"

Drust regarded him imperturbably. "That will leave you with two gold chains and my mother's very long memory for injustice. Thy cattle will be Britain's wonder for their mortality." He tried to rise again; this time the guard quashed him back into the chair.

The baron thought: the earl Bishop was imminent. Two dead faeries and two gold chains would benefit no one. He was still thinking furiously when Brangaene pattered up the stairs into the hall.

"Men, father, a whole line of them on the west road. Good day, Drust, are you working on my wishes? At least five hundred men, father, all in iron. When can I have the grail, Drust?"

He shook his head. "There's no bargain made, lass. 'Done' my lord says and takes my hand on it, then 'undone' says he when he learns what I want. Alas—no grail, Brangaene."

She flew at her father, stricken. "Why not? It has to be a bargain. The book said. Give him something."

"Don't tempt me." Her father drew her close with an acerbic smile. "He's asked the single rose among my weeds, the job of my declining years."

She hopped up and down with the urgency. "So *give* it to him!"

"He wants you."

It caught Brangaene on the upswing of a hop. She came down with a thud. "Huh?"

Drust favored her with what he hoped was a winning smile. "You'll be the only golden-haired girl among my people, a bright star in a midnight sky. No longer dreaming of faerie folk, but a princess among them, sharing their lives, learning to herd and milk goats—"

Rainier panted up the stairs and rushed across the hall. "My Lord! The earl bishop is at the gate with five hundred men, five times what we have on the walls. What defense can we make?"

"Against five hundred? What would you do, Rainier?"

"I'd bloody well let him in, sir."

"Precisely," the baron sighed. "Surrender politely, invite his gace to dinner and hope he chokes on it."

Rainier hurried away, his orders trailing behind him through the air like a ragged banner. "Open the gates. Open the gates. . ."

"Goats?" Brangaene said. "Smelly goats?"

Drust smiled. "The most fragrant in Britain. Will learn to skin cattle and scrape hides—"

Brangaene swallowed. "Scrape hides?"

"And wear them as our women do, and pitch and strike our tents when we follow the herds to graze. But look at you! So pale and startled." Drust held out his arms. "What do I offer you but your own dreams?"

"I never dreamed goats. Father—"

"Peace, child. Would I marry you to this?"

"I thought not," Drust rose with confident regret. "So, of course . . ."

Footsteps again. Rainier burst out of the stairwell, even more breathless. "Ruin, my lord! Poverty, destruction and the end of all! His grace is taking the cattle and swine and all that's not nailed or mortared down—"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

There was a growing uproar in Rainier's wake, voices dogs, dozens of feet tramping up the stairs into the hall. The earl bishop appeared, out of breath, out of sorts, and perfunctory. Hardly an imposing figure either as noble or man of God, he looked like a tax collector whose books were not yet balanced. Behind him came his entourage—soldiers, the almoner, the clerks already listing on vellum the valuables attached, one of them with a voice like deep-knelling doom reciting aloud as he scribbled: "Four ivory chests . . . one oaken *prie-dieu*."

Brangaene wailed to heaven: "*I hate goats!*"

The bishop nodded to her. "Then you won't mind that I've removed yours."

"Eight goats," verified the clerk. "Seventeen hens . . ."

"I can't stay supper, baron. I'm dispossessing you. Look to that table, you men. And the chairs, all of them."

Drust was picked up by two brawny soldiers and the chair swept out from under him.

"Five chairs . . ."

"Sorry about this, baron, but you wouldn't help when I needed, so I must foreclose."

The baron mopped his brow. "Your grace is known to be just. Can't we negotiate?"

"Your troubles are miniscule to mine," the bishop swept up the candlesticks. "That's it, men, all of it. Everything."

The hall was growing quite crowded with soldiers lugging out furniture and chests, and since it was near supper time, the quartet of dogs elected to charge musically through the procession, eddying about the fringes of the activity. "Four . . . dogs," noted the clerk, but the bishop kicked him.

"Not them, you idiot!"

"Blot . . . four dogs."

"Not my goldware," moaned the baron. "It belonged to the baroness."

"One chest goldware."

"I'm ruined; I'm a poor man."

"*I hate tents!*" Brangaene screamed.

"Tent?" The clerk paused, looking up. "Did I miss a tent?"

"*Keep your grail!*"

The baron muttered brokenly, "At a time like this . . . grails." Instantly the bishop was at his side. "What is this? What grail?"

"Grails," the baron echoed in feeble despair. Then, slowly he said it again. "Grail!" A dawning purpose lit his eye already tinged with the madness to match a desperate hour. "Grails! Yes, look!" He thrust the two gold chains with their emerald pendants before the bishop. "Treasure, your grace. Gold, silver, pearls, a hundred thousand marks of it. Look at these!"

The earl bishop looked, but he had heard something that faded the emeralds to green clay. "The holy grail, did you say?"

It was to the baron's credit he could think on his feet, and he knew how to play a trump. "*The* holy grail." His arm swept out to point triumphantly at the bewildered Drust. "He has it all and promised it to me."

"The grail," whispered the bishop, sepulchral as his subject.

"But my *own* goods," the baron reminded him delicately.

The earl bishop looked, but he had moment. "Bring it all back! Everything!" And far down the stairs the order coursed and echoed. *Bring it back. Bring it back. . .* The trudging feet paused, turned and started back up the stairs, the dogs dodging

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

around and among them, baying for supper. One of them nibbled at the clerk.

"Brangaene," said her father tenderly, "I'm a man of my word. Prepare yourself."

"Wait!" Drust looked hopelessly from father to weeping child. "You mean—"

"*I hate cows!*"

"So don't drink milk." The baron took her hand and placed it in Drust's, the world once again in place and revolving nicely. "I mean you made a bargain, you demented elf. You're getting married."

MALGON understood none of it as he waited by the saddled horse watching the approach of Drust and the great bishop. The world had turned turvy. The bishop's men peered from every casement and cranny of the small keep while their lord loped about muttering feverishly of grails. The baron looked doubtful. Drust and Brangaene were betrothed and miserable.

But Queen Olwen—he shuddered to think of *her* when he broke the news. Her merest irritation could blister paint, but her rage was lethal as it was silent and patient. Malgon shivered a little with the memory.

Drust seemed different, too. His open good nature was now masked with sober purpose and a kind of sorrow. It wasn't right for faerie to be so serious.

Drust halted by him, the earl bishop hovering over them both like a thundercloud.

"Malton, hast the message clear, what to ask the queen?"

"Clear, Drust."

"Her leave to follow the road of the gods."

"And the grail," said the earl bishop. "That above all. Her son's life in exchange."

Drust favored him with an inscrutable look. "And the Jerusalem Cup," he verified. "Tell Olwen I would drink from it."

The bishop's mouth dropped open. "*Drink* from it? You would profane—are you serious?"

"Most gravely so," Drust assured him. "It is old custom. The queen would demand it if I didn't. Faerie are innocent—as the world goes—and when we travel out among tallfolk, we drink from the grail on our return to show we are still God's first children. There are dangers . . . your grace is a man of learning. Surely you know the legend of this holy vessel?"

The troubled bishop knew only too well. The most sacred relic in Christendom could not be touched or even approached by the impure without instant death. To drink from it as this vagrant pixie proposed was not only sacrilege but madness that beggared adjectives.

And yet the thought came unbidden—he would make confession of the pride—if he himself could be allowed . . .

He shelved the thought. Devout he was, but the product of a suspicious world. Faerie were notorious deceivers. He knew not only the legends but the factual history of the relic. A few subtle questions would show the truth of it.

"Where was this stolen?" he demanded.

"Acquired," Drust amended tactfully. "At Glastonbury."

"The abbey, of course?"

"No, the old wattle church. No more than a mud hut it was then."

The bishop felt himself begin to sweat. "Where hidden? Behind the altar? Under the floor?"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"In a well, my mother said."

The earl bishop swallowed hard. His heart skipped a beat. "Wh-why should it be brought to Britain at all?"

Drust answered easily. "The merchant had friends here."

"What friends? What friends would a poor Jew have in Britain?"

Drust smiled at Malgon. "Mark how dost try to catch me out. Your grace knows Joseph was a friend of the governor of Judea and a merchant in tin. Who needs hearsay when common knowledge will do? Every port in the Middle Sea, from Rome to Thebes on the Nile, shipped its tin from Cornwall. Is not Joseph still remembered and sung about there? Belike he made the journey more than once."

The earl bishop hid his trembling hands in the folds of his robe. "You have seen the grail?"

"Olwen told me of it. 'Tis kept masked."

"Describe the jewels set in the vessel."

"There be no jewels," Drust shook his head. "No, *those* stories were writ in French, and not even your grace would trust a Frank. The Christ-man wasn't rich. Bronze it is and plain as truth. Mother wouldn't prize it else." His glance flicked over the bishop's rich mantle filigreed in cloth-of-gold. "Gaudy's not to her taste."

The bishop turned away to hide his excitement. He looked up at his men perched like predatory birds on the walls, the baron and his daughter waiting at the hall entrance. Most of the grail stories were maundering, allegorical romance, and over the centuries a thousand liars claimed to have seen it. They all described a cup or bowl too rich for most kings let alone the simple inn that housed the yet-obscure band of the Nazarene on the night of the Last Supper.

Now, the bishop was a religious man—as those things went—though he could not believe the grail had been withdrawn into heaven or simply disappeared from mortal sight. Lost, stolen or strayed, it had to be somewhere.

"Bring it." He turned and bustled away toward the chapel.

Drust embraced Malgon. "Haste thee back. The tower will be lonely."

Malgon studied him closely. "Thee looks sad as death."

"No matter. Go."

But Malgon caught his arm. "Nay, tell. Hast been thy servant; hast not been thy friend as well?"

Drust's eye twinkled with the ghost of his old merriment—and an elusive something else behind it. "And will be when bishop and baron be long forgot. Faerie's dealt with greedy men before, else why our saying that one thing worse than wanting . . ."

"Is getting," Malgon finished it. "True, they be all stupid and mad. Help me to this stirrup, Drust; 'twas set for a giant."

Drust watched him across the bridge and onto the north road, then turned back toward the keep. Brangaene left her father and hurried across the bailey toward him. Drust's mouth curved ironically; this wishing business was quite beyond her now. She looked like someone who'd conjured a rose and received a thorn.

"Durst, what happened to the bishop? Runs past us without a word, talking to himself. Not even vespers yet, and he's in chapel praying for all he's worth."

"That won't take long."

"What did he ask of you?"

His expression was strange, but the words were gentle when they came, as if he were teaching a child.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"What you all want of faerie: wishes granted, dreams come true, death put off till some far time when the world's lost all of its sweet. He wants magic in a bronze bowl. And what's your pleasure today?"

Brangaene saw the thing he had tried to conceal from Malgon, the pain. She might have missed it a week before, but even unicorn hunters, when they grow up, have to start somewhere.

"Poor Drust. I didn't mean to . . ."

"Ladybug, don't be sad. I was like you once. Because I couldn't see any further than a frog, I thought my lily pad was the world. Then I saw how big the world really was, and how little and how few we are. Olwen has less folk to call her queen than the great bishop brought here with him. Our cattle are scrawny, our children starve, and we have no land. What little graze is left the tallfolk's sheep tear away bit by bit, year by year. We move from poor to worse and must keep on moving until there's nothing left. Gold, jewels," he spread his hands helplessly, "these buy *things*, Brangaene. They can't—there's a word in my tongue that means *what was then*, but more than that. It means the good, green time, all the good things that were. My mother will never understand. Malgon will never understand. And it's not in my poor pudding of a heart to tell them." After a moment, Drust took her hand and kissed it. "And *you* want magic?"

"Not any more," she confessed. "Not that you're not *very* nice, Drust, just . . ."

"Not entirely what you wished."

"I guess it's the goats."

Drust surveyed her, his manner changing abruptly. "Look, lass, when you make a gown, you don't just cut and stitch away with no thought to it. You measure what's needed. Well, it's the same with wishes: they have to fit *you*. I'll guess you've never done it right. Would you like to try?"

Brangaene hesitated; the whole phenomenon had proved hazardous. "Should I?"

"You have one left. Close your eyes and think of something you want so deep you never even whispered it."

Eyelids squeezed tight around the effort, Brangaene concentrated.

"Oh dear." She giggled. "Oh, my goodness!"

"You see?"

"I didn't even wish. It was just—there."

"No dragons or grails?"

"No," Brangaene blushed—rather more with anticipation than embarassment. "No, indeed."

Two men-at-arms marched out from the hall, halted, flanking Drust like falcons bracketing a sparrow. "The baron wants a word with you. Quick *march!* One-two-one-two—step *out*, you horrible little man! One-two . . ."

Drust tried to keep up with them.

The baron met them, rubbing his hands together nervously. "No problems? Your servant will return, of course?"

Drust nodded. "Until then, back to jail, I suppose."

"Just to keep things regular. The *cuisine* will not stint. There'll be a good supper."

"And wine," Brangaene prompted from behind the soldiers.

"Of course, he's our guest." The baron stepped close to Drust, lowering his voice. "My abbreviated friend, I don't know how you take to metaphor, but you and I are ripe wheat." He inclined his head significantly toward the chapel. "And *he* has a very large scythe."

"Just so, my lord," Drust said ex-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

pressionlessly. "And what price wishes now?"

"Eh?"

"The grail and treasure make two. 'Twas not in the bargain, mind, but if I *could* eke out a third . . ."

In the elogent silence of understanding, they listened to the interminable Latin braying forth from the chapel where the bishop was, as it were, covering his bet.

The baron sighed. "If indeed."

"Just a thought." Drust let it hang in the air between them. The guards in his wake, he started up the tower stairs.

A WEEK PASSED, eight days, nine. Then a morning came when the sun climbed only half-heartedly into the sky, sulked and then hid its face in thick cloud. On the tenth day, the small world of the keep was wrapped in fog, and out of it came Malgon on the same manor horse, leading two of Olwen's ponies. Drust watched him cross the bailey bridge. Within minutes, he heard the heavy tread of the soldiers counterpointed with the light patter of Brangaene's feet.

"Drust! To the hall and quickly. Malgon's come with a letter from your mother, and the bishop's angry because no one can read it, and—oh, hurry!"

The guards hustled him away in the backwash of her haste. In the hall were the earl bishop, the baron and Rainier, and in the center of their regard, like a spaniel pup among irritable greyhouds, the weary Malgon.

"This fool of yours can barely speak English," the bishop growled.

"Here, read." The baron thrust a rolled parchment at Drust. "I didn't think anyone still wrote on sheepskin."

"And a palimpsest at that," Rainier peered at it. "Ancient as those chains they wore. This queen doesn't write very often."

The heavy parchment was tied with a strip of worn linen. Drust undid it, speaking to Malgon in faerie, "How did the queen at this?"

"Cold," Malgon murmured. "So cold and quiet, would swear 'twas winter and not spring in a's tent. Then a smiles like death and sits down to write this."

Drust glanced at the rounded Gaelic script and the scrawled, looping signature. His mother styled herself, as her ancestors did, with a title that had not appeared on any map for a thousand years, if at all. He felt a pang; for Olwen and her people, nothing would ever change.

To the English who hold Drust:

I marvel that so many tallfolk can prize cold metal over the real treasures of this world and yet call themselves wise.

Natheless, my son is precious to me. For his safety, you have my leave to travel the road of the gods and take such fortune as you find there, to the which is added my chiefest possession known as the Jerusalem Cup, excepting only our custom that Drust may prove the innocence of his soul by drinking therefrom.

I wish only to see my son safe home.

Olwen, Queen of Prydn

Rainer squinted quizzically. "Queen of what?"

Drust handed him the letter. "It means 'the very old people'."

The bishop's eyes were fevered. "But the grail, where is it?"

"Olwen's word is good," said Drust. "Will be with the treasure. And I will drink from it." He went to the case-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ment and scrutinized the air beyond it. "After this fog will come rain," he told them. "And we need the rain to find the road. We must leave now."

The bishop needed no urging. "To horse!" He whirled and hurried to the stairs, his officers in his wake. *To horse!* The relayed orders echoed after him.

"Well, Brangaene," her father took her arm. "Will you come? It seems only right. This was your inspiration to begin with."

The guards had taken up their parenthetical position around Drust and Malgon. "Yes, ride with us, Brangaene," Drust laughed. "To the end of the road, the end of wishing. Who could miss that?" He shrugged philosophically to the guards. "Come, sirs."

THEY TRAVELED north all day through a blanketing fog, Drust and Malgon in the lead, the bishop and two guards just behind, then the baron and Brangaenen. Behind them, in a train stretching over a quarter mile, came the bishop's entourage.

The road gave way to forest, the great trees looming up and fading again like ghosts behind them. When the last of the gaunt shapes disappeared in the fog, Brangaene missed them, nothing now but wild gorse, rolling moor and dampness that chilled through her heavy cloak. They pitched their tents in the middle of it before nightfall. The next day was drearier still. Though the fog was gone, heavy clouds lowered over the barren hill tops. Before mid-day, the rain began, gentle at first, then harder in a steady downpour through which they plodded all afternoon across the monotonous moor in the wake of the faerie men. Before they pitched camp for the night, Brangaene was sneezing with her worst cold in years.

Swathed in blankets, she huddled over a brazier in her small tent, hating quite beyond demure limits the weather, the moor, her father, the bishop and the whole blighted notion of wishes and magic.

"Dab!" she cursed. "Dabdab*dab*!"

"Odd; your da just said that."

Drust stood in the entrance of the tent with a steaming cup. "Magic's hard work, isn't it? Here." He handed her the cup. "Olwen's own tea. Made from honey comb and flowers."

She sipped at it. "Oh, it's good."

"Some say it's the rose does the trick, some the pimpernel, but we never have colds."

"Where are we bound, Drust? Will this moor ever end?"

He nodded. "Soon enough. Tomorrow we must be in a certain place."

"Why?"

"Not why, lass. When. When the sun comes out."

Like much of what Drust said, Brangaene understood it not at all. She listened to the rain drumming against the tent sides. "What if it doesn't?"

"Then we wait till it does. Nothing is perfect."

An interesting aside: this logical question and answer just might have been the end of the Age of Faith and the beginning of the Renaissance. Everything starts somewhere, and Brangaene was no longer a child of pure belief.

THE RAIN let up toward midmorning of the next day. Their way ran through uplands now, wave after wave of bare, steepening hills and rocky outcroppings. Drust dropped back to ride at the baron's knee and found him red-eyed as his daughter

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and definitely out of sorts.

"If you know this treasure to the last pound, why must we look for some damned silly road-of-the-gods?"

"Only Olwen knows the way. I've seen it only once." Drust pointed to the hills, alike as wrinkles in a blanket. "Without the road, I couldn't find it again."

The baron exploded. "There's no bloody road! Nothing but heath and no end to that."

"Will be soon," Drust soothed him. "We must have passed the treasure an hour ago."

"An *hour*—?"

"Or thereabouts. Must go beyond to see back, like a lifetime. Brangaene, lass, how's your cold?"

She snuffled. "Bedder, thag you."

Up ahead, the earl bishop and his guards were paused over something on the ground. The bishop wheeled his horse and cantered back to Drust.

"There are tracks. They might be your people."

Drust urged his pony forward to the indicated spot. A hundred yards beyond, Malgon was halted, observing the lightening sky.

The prints were those of a single, small horse. Most were obliterated by rain, but they pointed south.

"Faerie horse," Drust confirmed.

The bishop pondered the print. "Should we follow?"

"You'd never find her. That mark in the print there? Olwen's horse. She's brought the grail for me to drink."

The bishop regarded him solemnly. "You still persist in that madness?"

"The old custom, almost law. My mother expects it of me." Drust smiled quickly as if to dispel any personal doubts. "Will be no danger to your grace, of course, though it might be wise to stand well back and perhaps not stare it straight on."

The earl bishop could no longer choke back the question. "How many . . . men have drunk from the grail?"

"In a thousand years? Many."

"And died?"

"Only a few," said Drust offhandedly. "It may be the Christman's more merciful than one thinks."

"Drust!"

It was Malgon ahead, pointing not to the sky now, but the ground. "Be shadow! The sun!"

Abruptly, Malgon kicked the pony into a flat run up a rocky defile. Drust beckoned the others forward in a sweeping wave and galloped after him. The whole column rippled forward in the rush up the narrow pass, the bordering rocks now showing in sharp relief the shadows that raced across them as the last clouds parted and the sun burned through. Up and up they clattered until Brangaene felt the ground level out under her horse. She rounded a sharp bend in the trail; there on the rocky ledge before her stood Drust and Malgon looking away to the south, while the bishop sat his horse with a foolish expression on his face, saying over and over to himself, "I don't believe it. No, I don't believe it. We could have—we should have known . . ."

And Brangaene's heart leaped with the last flicker of an old dream. Sad, because it would never come again. The old tales were not magic, no part of magic, only truth—and a kind of map worn faint with time.

"There, Brangaene!" Drust's voice rang out over the bishop's. "The road of the gods. *Where it goes down!*"

Across the moist prism of the morning sky, the rainbow bent its glory to earth.

THE LONG MOUND looked like any

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

other low rise in the rolling hills. Only when Brangaene knew what it was could she see that it rose too smoothly, the length of its hundred-foot ridge too even. It had been built of stone like the great circle on Salisbury Plain, Drust told her, and sodded over so long it was truly part of the hills around it.

Now she knew why Drust had stressed *when*. The rainbow lasted no more than a quarter hour, fading as the sun clouded over again. Before it went, Drust carefully estimated the exact point at which it would touch the earth, selected a series of references leading to that spot, then led them back along the trail.

Two more hours and the hardest riding of the whole journey, straight up hills, jolting down the other side. The mist rose rapidly, seeping like pale white snakes into the valleys and copses, rising toward the low hill tops. Just after they attained Drust's last reference point, Brangaene spied the figure that might have been a stunted tree or a large bush in the thickening fog, but she thought it moved slightly. Later, she saw it again: off to her left, slipping away into a wall of whiteness like a ghost-wolf padding their flank. But for a moment Brangaene had seen clearly, if only in silhouette, the pony and its small, hooded rider.

She could hardly see the others now in the mist. Drust must be moving on pure instinct. At last the wraith-figures of the two faerie men dipped into one last defile and disappeared briefly. When she and her father drew up on them, they were sitting their horses amid the bishop and his guards, and beyond loomed the long, regular shape of the cairn.

Drust slipped out of the saddle and knelt to examine something in the earth. The bishop followed him.

"What is it?"

Drust pointed to the small hoof print. "Olwen."

If no one else believed, Brangaene did.

The baron studied the dimensions of the cairn. "This thing goes back for at least thirty yards. Is it all hollow?"

"And goes far down," Drust told him.

The bishop was all business now: "Set my tent here at the entrance . . . this *is* the entrance?"

"Hard by." Drust took several steps to the foot of the mound where a tumbled outcropping of stones rose some six feet above him. He leaned almost casually against one of the stones; with a grinding rumble, the largest boulder in the pile rolled back to reveal an aperture large enough for a man to wiggle through.

"Will need a torch," he said.

"Bring a resin torch, bring them all," the bishop commanded. "A fire here quickly. Set my tent."

Brushwood was collected, rubbed with tallow and lighted in a large brazier. With a great deal of bustle, the bishop's tent was pitched. Drust dipped his torch into the fire, slipped into the black opening and disappeared. Malgon waited by the rocks. Suddenly he knelt close to the opening. Brangaene heard him mumble something, then he rose and shouted to all of them.

"The Jerusalem Cup be here. All may look. Be covered with a cloth."

Drust's arm jutted out of the hole bearing an object swathed in a long dark cloth. "Take it, Mal, so I can climb out."

Malgon shrank back and fell on his knees, turning his face away. "Nay, cannot. Do not ask it of me. Be not shriven or heard mass this fortnight."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Still the arm protruded from the opening. Like that which caught Arthur's sword in the lake, Brangaene thought. All around her, the men were dismounting, sinking to their knees, the sound of their armor eerie and distorted in the mist. Only the bishop remained upright, rooted in front of his tent, gazing at the masked object.

"I need both hands to climb out," the voice came again. "Let him who is without fear of his soul take the grail from me."

Head bowed over her hands in reverence, Brangaene felt the awed silence. Then a rustle of movement. Her eyes opened. Slowly, deliberately, the bishop moved toward the Grail. Brangaene swallowed hard. There must be fear in him, but the bishop kept going till he stood within reach of the upthrust arm.

He stretched out both hands and took the covered grail. An exhalation of fright and wonder sighed through the company of his men. When Drust clambered out of the hole, he regarded the earl bishop with a grave respect.

"Your grace is the holiest of men—and the bravest. They may go in now. The treasure is there." He raised his hand for the watching men and opened it to reveal the rubies lying on his palm. He let them fall like so many pebbles. The men watched carefully where they rolled, their eyes wide, tongues licking out over dry lips.

"The treasure is there!" Drust raised his voice. "Olwen's word is kept."

"Yes . . ." The bishop's voice cracked slightly. He stared at his men and hardly saw them. "Yes, go in. Take the sacks. Get . . . get it all."

A dozen, twenty torches were dipped into the fire. A line of fireflies in the mist, the men squeezed through the opening and vanished into the cairn. The bishop appeared oblivious to it all. With stiff movements, he carried the covered prize to his tent.

Passing Malgon, Drust whispered something, received the other's silent affirmation, then joined Brangaene at the fire, listening with them to the growing clamor of discovery within the cairn.

"Now they're finding it, hear them? Finding out how much there is, how it shines in the light, thinking there's nothing lovelier, not even a fair woman. Feeling it in their hands. Wondering will it all disappear as they've heard tell. You can smell their greed. Don't go in, baron." Drust smiled up at him. "There *is* that third wish."

IN HIS TENT, the earl bishop placed his precious burden on a low chest. He prayed briefly, then contemplated of his—no, his soul's desire.

The first test was past. He was allowed to approach, to touch it, perceive its solidity. The shape under the woolen cloth was a foot and a half across by perhaps six inches deep. He fingered the edge of the cloth, took hold of it—

"Your grace."

Drust moved forward to face the bishop across the chest. "I came to drink, and so grave with the thought of it, I forgot to bring wine. May a frightened man beg that favor?"

"You will still do this?"

"I must," Drust said tonelessly. He indicated a wine-skin. "May I?"

The bishop's throat tightened.

"God with us." With a quick motion, Drust jerked the cover from the bowl. As he did, the bishop shut his eyes and crossed himself. Nothing happened; the world churned on.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

When he looked again, the bowl sat quite mundanely on the chest, feeble light from the one candle darting with unusual brightness over the polished surfaces. He watched in horrified fascination as Drust unstoppered the wineskin and poured a good measure into the vessel. The red wine swashed and sparkled over the polished bottom.

"Your grace will send this to the Pope?"

"What? Yes . . . yes, I will."

"Don't tell him of this act. Would not bring on him the sin of envy." Drust laid hands on the bowl.

"*Faerie, are you mad?*"

The answer, when it came, was faint and weary. "No . . . no. Only a man from a small, weak people whose green time is gone, who will not walk Britain much longer. Olwen and I be their strength and their conscience, perhaps their soul. The Christ-man could not escape Gethsemane, neither can I."

Yet he hesitated, hovering over the vessel. The tent rustled back, and a beefy sergeant lumbered into view. "Pardon, your grace, but—" He saw the bowl and stopped. "God a mercy!"

"What is it?"

The man tried not to look at the vessel, but his agitation had to do with more immediate problems. "Sir, the treasure—"

"It is there?"

The sergeant's eyes seemed slightly glazed. "Th-there?" he stammered. "God, yes. And there and *there*! *Yards* of it, levels and stairs of it. Ringlets, plate, torques, jewels. We haven't sacks enough for all there is, and not to the bottom yet. The coins spill out of the chests like pebbles." He thrust out a handful. "See!"

The bishop examined the bronze and silver coins, all very ancient but legible. He turned them over, reading the inscriptions. " 'Agricola'. 'Tranjanus'. These are Roman."

"For sure," said Drust blandly. "All Roman and writ of in the Saxon books. Some they took away, some they buried should they return. Faerie watched where they dug." He shrugged. "They were here four hundred years; did owe much rent."

The sergeant glanced nervously out of the tent. "Sir, the men outside. They hear those in the cave. They saw the rubies this madman tossed on the ground. I can't hold them back much longer."

The earl bishop bristled. "If one of them steals so much as one coin—"

"A wise man would let them," Drust observed. "How much can magpies steal from a granary? Let every man fill his pocket before he fills your sacks."

"That bunch?" The sergeant snorted. "They'll steal my lord blind, little man."

"Would do that anyway," Drust countered smoothly. "Your grace, when generosity comes cheap, buy a reputation. Will need them all to carry. Singing your praises will make light work of it. Let them go in."

It took only a moment for the bishop to see the wisdom. How much gold could one man tuck away in a tunic? "Give that order, sergeant."

"Yes, sir. God bless you, sir!" The sergeant hurried out. They heard his muffled, staccato orders, the answering shout and the rush of feet.

But Drust's attention had returned to the bronze bowl. "Was glad your man came in. It forestalled—" He broke off suddenly. "Pity a poor man. I must drink, but I cannot, not before shriving. You are a man of God and most blessed. Will you guard—It—

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

while I pray?"

"It will be here." The bishop looked down at the bowl; the wine shone dark and red as rubies. He barely heard Drust leave the tent.

He looked at the bowl. After a long time, he bent and picked it up.

DRUST joined the baron and Brangaene by the fire, a small island of light in the fog. For some minutes they watched the last of the bishop's men struggle through the small opening to the cairn. Brangaene wondered if there was room inside for all of them.

"And more," Drust told her.

Then the last man vanished into the black mouth. They heard his shout of discovery added to the others that faded as the men ran and stumbled from level to level, finding, filling their pockets. Then quiet. The grey-ghost horses stamped and snuffled. Only Drust noted the slight sound that might have come from the earl bishop's tent, as if something had fallen.

"This is a strange place," Brangaene shivered. "The eyes on those men when they went in . . "

"Like their master," the baron growled. "And what's that holy hypocrite up to?"

"At war with conscience and need." Drust warmed his hands over the fire. "Will not be long."

"A moment's too long with such as these." The baron spat. "Greedy pigs, let 'em choke on the damned gold."

Drust favored him with that odd smile—amusement, sadness, more wisdom than the cairn held treasure. "Yes. Your third wish."

He took several quick strides to the rocky outcrop of the cairn entrance. "Mark how faerie keeps his word. Three wishes. One, the gold. Two, the Cup. And three to choke them on it. One stone to open, another to close." Drust pressed against one of the stones. With a grating sound, the cairn was sealed tight again. His dark head snapped up. "And the third—now, Malgon!"

Brangaene looked up with him. On the roof of the cairn, dim with mist, she saw the little figure bend close to to the ground, move something, then run nimbly down one side. Before the booming began, before the earth trambled, she saw another, mounted figure race away behind Malgon. Then the shocks came, and the muffled roar that grew as the ground quaked beneath her feet.

Brangaene gasped, clutched her father's arm. Before their eyes, the long roof of the cairn buckled, went swaybacked and sank as five-ton stones toppled from the first interior level, ruptured the second, and the combined dead weight fell on the third. . .the fourth. The sickening concussions numbled through Brangaene's feet again and again. At length they weakened, the distant roar faded, the shrieking echoes died. From the entrance stone, a small dust-wraith emerged.

"Good Jesus," the baron managed weakly. "What happened?"

"The end of wishing," said Drust.

Brangaene trembled under her father's arm. "All of them. All the b-bishop's men." The thought struck her like ice water. "The bishop!"

"Let him be," Drust held up his hand. "The thing's done; the queen will be calling me home. Baron, Brangaene, share a cup of wine with me before I go."

The baron stared at him. "But the bishop—?"

"Please," Drust protested mildly. "It is so peaceful now." He cocked an

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ear. "Aye, they're coming."

"But where is he?" the baron persisted, nervously eyeing the tent. "Is he deaf?"

"Quite."

The soft *clop* of hooves came out of the mist. One horse stopped, the other grew louder until Malgon materialized, leading Drust's pony up to the gutterin fire.

"Thy mother wants thee home, Drust."

"Will come." Drust dug in his saddle bag, extracted a plain wooden bowl and gave it to Malgon. "Fetch me wine, Mal. Some of the bishop's best."

Malgon vanished into the tent. Some yards up the defile, barely limned in the fog, the cloaked and hooded rider waited, motionless.

Brangaene wondered. "Drust, is that—?"

"Olwen. Will not come close. Has been hurt too often by tallfolk."

Malgon reappeared with the filled bowl which he placed in his master's hand.

"His grace?" Drust asked delicately.

Malgon shook his head.

"Did drink, then?"

"Did."

The baron put his question very carefully; not that it troubled him overmuch. "The earl bishop is . . . dead?"

"Dead as pork," Malgon contemplated. "Not even Caesar be so well deceased."

"He was reaching for this from the first day," Drust mused. "Did only help him along." He chuckled softly. "Olwen burnished the bowl to make it shine, and in the burnish was rubbed foxglove and hemlock. Would kill six bishops."

Brangaene caught her breath. "You—poisoned—the holy grail?"

"We tempted him with a custom that never was, Brangaene. If that's a sin—well, I think your father will pray for me."

Malgon laughed. Out of the mist came another laugh like a silvery, musical echo. Drust drank from the bowl and passed ii to the baron. "Especially when he has five hundred horses and their saddles to sell."

"Faerie," the baron judged, "I never realized, but you command a sterling quartet of talents: philosopher, diplomat, liar and thief. Have you thought of a career at court?"

"Perhaps someday. If must take up a trade." Drust passed the bowl to Brangaene but she struck it out of his hand.

"*You poisoned the holy—*"

"Naynaynay, lass," Drust patiently retrieved the battered bowl. "Not the grail. Olwen never promised the grail. Did write of the Jerusalem Cup—"

"B-but—but wasn't that—"

"—Which belonged to Joseph's friend, the governor of Judea."

"The gov—" Suddenly the baron saw light. He could believe anything now. "You mean Pilate? *Pontius Pilate?*"

Drust nodded: "Does sound right, yes. 'Twas his wash bowl."

Monstrously sacriligious, but the baron had an irrepressible and quite secular urge to laugh. "Ye bloddy gods."

"Brangaene," Drust offered her the old bowl again. "This is no great Jerusalem Cup; this was made for common folk like us. But it holds pease porridge well and doesn't leak, old as it is." He pressed it into her hands. "Take it as a favor to Drust. When you eat or drink from it, remember me." He kissed her lightly, gave her a wink. "And leave a supper at your gate for tired faerie men."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

He nodded gravely to the baron, then mounted his pony. "Let's go home, Mal."

They rode away. Once, after the fog had swallowed them up, Brangaene heard Drust's joyful shout and again that other voice, low, melodious—welcoming.

That was all. She and her father were alone.

The baron spent some time stringing stallions into a train the mares would follow. He also inspected the tent. Malgon's assessment was precise; his grace rivaled Caesar, even the pharoahs, for the finality of his past tense. When the baron returned to his daughter, she was pensively turning the ancient bowl in her hands.

"Father . . ."

When you eat or drink from it, remember me.

She recalled the text, almost the same words, written so long ago.

So worn it was. So *very* old. . .

Her voice was tiny, a whisper. "Father—what kind of wood is this?"

"Hm?" He examined it. "Not oak or ash. . .not English at all, I's say. It's—well, I don't know."

"I do," Brangaene murmured. "Like my chests from Lebanon. This is cedarwood."

So ancient, dark-stained, the rim warped with time. Brangane held it to her heart, and her laugh was tremulous. "That man, that fine, beautiful man. He brought it after all. He brought it." Her eyes glistened with purpose. "Father, do you think the *arch*bishop—"

Her father understood then. "Oh, not again, Brangaene. That? You heard him, it's his porridge bowl."

"Father." There was something rising in Brangaene's voice that the baron should have heeded. "Listen to me. I think we should ask the archbishop—"

But he turned away and spread his arms to the fog. "She's hopeless. Hopeless! Will she never be done wishing?"

He did not see the subtle change of expression leveled at his back. *Just one more*, Branaene thought. Just the one Drust had taught her to realize, the never-even-whispered wish. It was a good day for miracles, and why not one of her own? She sighted coolly on the baron's posterior, wound up with a dainty hop-step and fired from the toe. "One to grow on!"

Poonk!

The baron flew.

As he lacked his daughter's practice, his flight was brief and graceless. When he sat up, thoroughly stunned, he faced a new Brangaene—confident, serene and sure. She held up the bowl.

"On second thought," Brangaene said crisply, "Tell the archbishop *I* want to see *him*."

As IT TURNED OUT, the baron's judgement was suspect on several counts. He thought his arse would never stop aching, but it did. He thought he might come back and dig up the gold, but he never found it. Though after a while, as they rode home, the sun came out and Brangaene sang sweetly.

The archbishop sent the bowl to Rome where it was studied by ecclesiastic scholars imbued with the new spirit of rationalism. They are studying it yet, as cautious scholars will, though the history-minded may note how suddenly grail stories went out of vogue. They might have asked Brangaene, but who in the wise new world would credit a girl who told fairy tales and still left a supper by the gate for no one in particular?

—PARKE GODWIN

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Sherwood Springer has appeared in a variety of publications, including the Saturday Evening Post; *his most recent stories have been in* Cosmos *and* Isaac Asimov's Science Fiction Magazine. *He makes his debut to our pages with a story about a telephone and–*

THE CHILL OF DISTANT LAUGHTER

SHERWOOD SPRINGER

ILLUSTRATED by JOHN RODAK

Manuscript found among the effects of the late Calvin Harper, M.D.

IT IS TIME for me to set down what I know of the strange death of Peter Delancey—information which, for reasons that will be soon apparent, I have not divulged to the police.

The affair began with a midnight telephone call. It had been a trying day at the office, and later a boiler explosion at the Stannard mill, resulting in an emergency call, had kept me up long past my bedtime. I had already stretched out with a sigh of exhaustion, and then, just as my mind began to tiptoe in and out, darkening room after room in preparation for sleep, my telephone rang.

"Heaven," I grumbled as I groped for the receiver, "must be a place where they have no telephones." Switching on the light, I wearily acknowledged the call.

"This is Jamison," a man's voice said. "Can you come over right away? Mr. Delancey is . . . is . . ."

"There, there, Jamison," I said. "Is it his heart again?" Peter Delancey had been my patient for many years. He was over seventy, and a cardiac condition had given rise to symptoms of warning in the past. With sleep still beckoning me, I entertained the thought of instructing Jamison, who for years had been Delancey's valet, houseman and cook, to administer whatever prescription seemed indicated from among those I knew were there in readiness for a mild attack. But my hopes vaporized in the next moment.

"I—I don't know, Doctor. Can you hurry? Mr. Delancey is . . . he's *down*!"

The word itself and the emphasis on it left no doubt the call was serious. "I'll be right over," I said.

Twenty minutes later I strode up the brick pathway that leads back from Arbor Street to the old house that would have been called a mansion three generations ago. As I reached for the wrought iron knocker the door was thrown open from within. Jamison's drawn face relaxed at sight of me. As he closed the door behind us, I started for the carpeted

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

stairway.

"No, Doctor, not up there. He's in the study." As I turned, Jamison was already gliding toward the massive oak door to the left.

Delancey's study! In all the years I had visited the house I had never seen that room, and, in fact, I had long ago concluded if there was a figurative skeleton in the house, Delancey's study was its closet.

Jamison gave the door an inward push, standing aside for me to enter. The room was high-ceilinged and shadowy, as most are in houses of that vintage. On the floor, in a semicircle of light cast by a lamp on the desk, sprawled the body of Peter Delancey.

He was prone, his right arm stretching full length beyond his head, his left, bent at the elbow, was partially extended, while one leg was drawn up in a most peculiar manner. As I reached his side, one glance at his face told me all that was necessary.

"I'm afraid we're too late," I said. "It was bound to happen sooner or later."

Disturbing the body as little as possible, I made the tests necessary to remove any doubt. As I finished, the silence was broken by a peremptory knocking on the outer door. I looked up, startled.

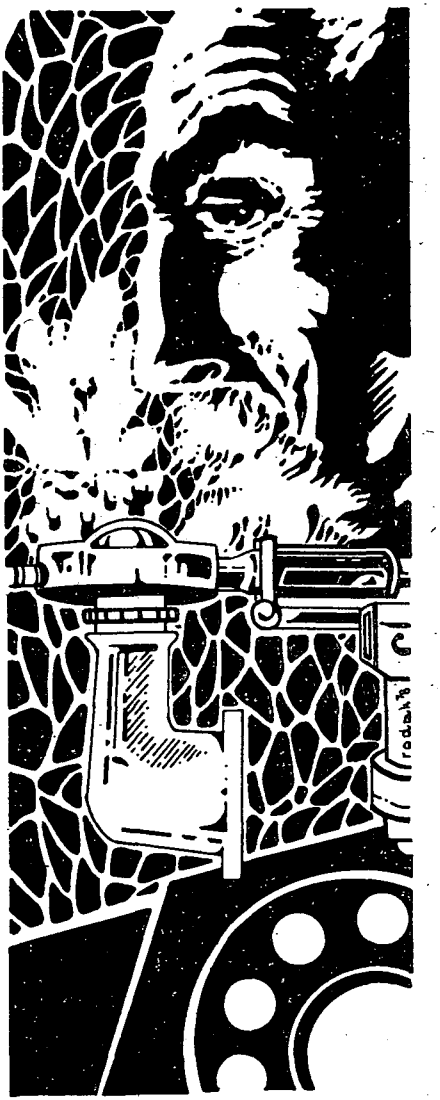
"It must be the police," Jamison said.

"Police?"

"Things didn't look right, Doctor. I thought. . ."

The sound was repeated, and my head tilted toward the door. "Better let them in."

As I replaced my instruments in my bag, I became aware of something I must have noted when first entering the study but had ignored for matters of more immediacy.



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

An odd, acrid, scarcely perceptible odor.

My eyes ranged the room as I sniffed in an attempt to place its origin. It was one of those tantalizing odors, vaguely familiar, that waft your memories to places far away and long ago, yet, though I could not identify any specific associations, I knew the odor had no place in Delancey's study.

My thoughts were interrupted as Jamison ushered a familiar lean, six-foot figure into the room. As I greeted him I wondered what Jamison had said on the phone that had brought Sergeant Gallagher of homicide to the scene.

His eyes homed in on the corpse. "Dead, eh? What's that smell?"

"Smell? I noticed it, too. Gunfire?"

He flashed me a penetrating glance. "No, I've smelled too much of that. What killed him, Doc?"

"Well—" I hesitated, "he had a heart condition. I assume—"

"Look here," he exclaimed, as he dropped to his knees. "His hands! Did you move him?"

"Scarcely. Just enough to—"

"Look at his fingers. Nails broken digging into the rug. He was trying to crawl—"

The sentence died as Gallagher's gaze shot out in line with the outstretched arm of the dead man. "The phone!" he said. "Quiet!"

Then I saw it. The light was dim in that far corner but I could make out the shape of an old-style wall telephone, and . . . "My word," I said, "the receiver's off."

Gallagher gave my arm a warning squeeze and darted on silent feet toward the instrument.

"No!" Jamison cried, as he lunged after the officer. "Don't touch it."

Gallagher wheeled and with one vehement gesture turned Jamison into quailing immobility.

Whipping out a handkerchief, the sergeant placed it around the receiver and lifted it to his ear. He held that pose for a full minute, then beckoned me. "How long've you been here?" he asked.

"Not long. Five minutes."

He placed the instrument in my hand. "Keep your ear peeled, Doc. If somebody answers, give me the high sign."

As I put the receiver to my ear I could hear it at once. The barren, monotonous "br-rrr . . . br-rrr . . . br-rrr . . ." that has haunted my dreams to this day. At that moment, however, it was merely the sound of a telephone ringing at the other end of the line.

Gallagher had turned to Jamison. "Now, what the hell was bothering you?"

The houseman winced. "I'm sorry, sir. Mr. Delancey never let *anyone* touch that phone, and for a second I forgot he wasn't . . . isn't . . . ."

"*You* didn't place a call on this phone?"

"Me? No, sir. I used the one in the hall. He never let even me touch this one. On pain of death, he said—or worse."

"How long's it been off the hook?"

Jemison hesitated, wet his lips and swallowed. The mechanism was obvious, and I stared at him with puzzled interest. What in the world was in the question that would make the man want to avoid answering it?

"Well?"

"I . . ." Jamison's gaze flickered to the floor. "I don't know how to tell you."

"My God, man," Gallagher exploded, "what's tough about it? *How long?* Two hours? Two days?"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Jamison steeled himself, looking full in the officer's face. "Thirty years, sir."

IN STUNNED SILENCE the two of us stood there while Jamison's words funneled down through our consciousness. When we recovered it was almost together, and only in inflection did our exclamations differ:

"Thirty years!"

"Thirty years?"

"That's preposterous," I added, more to appease my own insulted intelligence than to discredit Jamison.

Gallather threw him a sulphuric look. "Are you trying to tell me for thirty years you never saw Delancey use that phone?"

"I didn't say that. I think he used it often."

"What'd he say?"

"He never said anything. Just listened."

"What?"

"I think Mr. Delancey was just checking to make sure the phone was ringing at the other end."

Gallagher made a face. "This is crazy."

"It could be true, Sergeant," I said.

"That's not the point." Gallather grapsed my arm. I had been holding the receiver perhaps a foot away. Now I found the instrument suddenly thrust upward to my ear. "Here," he growled, "listen to this."

The bleak "br-rrrr . . . br-rrrr . . . br-rrrr . . ." seemed more disturbing, more insistent now.

"That's a phone ringing," Gallather went on. "It's ringing somewhere. Are you both trying to tell me a phone could ring like that, day and night, for thirty years? You're nuts. If anyone's within hearing distance of that bell, he'd have done something about it long ago. Did you ever have to listen to the jangle of a phone nobody answered? What would a day do to you? Or a week? You'd be gibbering. But let's say it's in a deserted building where nobody hears it—who's paying for it?"

The "br-rrrr . . . br-rrrr . . . br-rrrr . . ." was beginning to sound like a dentist's drill in my ear. "You have a point," I said.

"We're wasting time. Where's that other phone, Jamison? We'll have this traced. I've got to get the lab boys up here anyway. Will you keep an ear to that thing, Doc?"

In the interval, as I fought to ignore the annoying monotony of the far-off summons, I examined the pieces. Peter Delancey was dead. As his physician, my responsibilities were at an end. He belonged to the police now, and to the mortician and his Maker. Reason told me he had died of natural causes; there was nothing tangible to indicate otherwise.

Somehow, I had the disquieting feeling I was on the brink of the unknown and, childlike, I needed the reassurance of an explanation. That odor—just out of reach of my memory. Broken fingernails. A dying man clawing his way toward a telephone that had been ringing somewhere for thirty years. It didn't make sense. I thought of Peter Delancey's life—what I knew of it. A flint-hearted bachelor living frugally in this old house, with only Jamison as retainer. A gardener came once a week, as well as a cleaning woman to tidy up the house. And yet—I had heard the whisper many times—he was worth millions. In the market, it was said, he seemed infallible. He operated heavily, but quietly, refused directorships, and seldom was in the news. An incredible sort of life . . .

Gallagher, returning, interrupted

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

my reverie. "Anything yet, Doc?"

"I wouldn't call this nothing. It could get on your nerves. Can they trace it?"

"They told me the only line open from this address was the one I was using, period. We'll go over the wiring in the morning."

"I have a weird feeling you'll *never* learn where that call is going."

The sergeant was examining the window latches. "What makes you say that?"

"Well . . . it's hard to explain. I've been in medicine thirty-eight years. I've seen things you couldn't pin down and label like insect specimens . . . people living who should have died, people dying who should have lived. Man's knowledge goes just so far. Every once in a while we get to the edge of it, and find ourselves looking over . . ."

Gallagher was peering up the chimney of the fireplace. "I know what you mean, Doc. But in our business we just look a little farther and—" He broke off abruptly. "Jamison, if you never touched that phone how do you know it was ringing all that time?"

"I didn't say I didn't touch it, sir. I said Mr. Delancey had warned me not to touch it."

"Ah-hah!"

"You see, Mrs. Swenson wasn't allowed in here. Keeping the study clean was my job. When Mr. Delancey took me on about twenty-six years ago the phone was just like it is today. He told me the receiver'd been off for four years, and it meant his life and mine, too, if anybody replaced it. And he wasn't joking. By the look in his eyes I think he'd have killed me if I'd gone within a foot of it. And absolutely no one else was to be allowed in here when he was away—maybe you noticed the special lock on the door. But things have to be dusted, regardless, and I figured his words, 'Don't touch it,' really meant I should be careful not to hang up the receiver. So you see, sir, I've handled it many times."

"And you heard it ringing?"

"Well, I listened the first time out of curiosity. Since then I've known it was still ringing. You can hear it, you know, without putting it right to your ear."

"Didn't Delancey ever say why he left it ring like this? Or who he was trying to reach?"

"No. Never."

"Think hard. Did he ever refer to it at all after that first warning?"

"There was one thing years ago, when the man came to put in the dial phone. I asked Mr. Delancey whether he wanted them to change the one in the study, too, and he said—begging your pardon, sir—he said he was going to keep that one until hell freezes over."

With a snort, Gallagher resumed his work.

At this point, suddenly realizing my fatigue and sensing the night's developments were ended, with the sergeant's permission I said goodnight.

IT SHOULD have ended there. But somehow the memory of that sound—a lost telephone ringing endlessly somewhere—returned to plague me. It followed me homeward and invaded my sleep. Somehow, too, I had a foreboding that my part was not ended—just as the first act curtain of a mystery drama signifies there is more to come.

In the warm sunlight of the following morning, however, it all seemed rather absurd. Trying to forget the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

matter, I plunged into my work with an energy which surprised even Miss Keller, my nurse. But, as the day wore on, an urge to revisit the Delancey house became more and more impelling, and finally, about 2:00 o'clock, I could no longer ignore it. Telling Miss Dillon at the desk where to reach me, I rushed out and drove to the old mansion on Arbor Street.

"I happened to be passing," I said as Jamison opened the door, "and thought I'd drop in to see how the sergeant is making out."

The houseman gave no indication he noticed my dissembling. "They're working in the basement now," he said. "Shall I show you down?"

As I followed him along the hall to the kitchen my eyes swung to the study. The door was closed, as usual, and I was forced to smother an urge to fling it open and view by daylight the scene which had so disturbed me the night before.

"Tell me," I said. "I got the impression last night the sergeant suspected someone else was in the study with Delancey . . . ?"

As we reached the kitchen Jamison's words stepped on the heels of my trailing sentence.

"There was."

I started involuntarily. The flesh of my forearms felt cold with erecting papillae. Why? Was it because, although the possibility of foul play had been present last night, I hadn't, until now, considered it seriously? Or was it a more sinister sensation, based on belief no one else *could* have been in the study?

"You saw him?"

His eyes flicked nervously around the kitchen. "No . . . but—" His voice dropped cautiously.

"What do you mean?"

"There's no way he could have got out."

"Then what makes you think—?"

"I heard them. You see, Mr. Delancey was in there all evening, and I wait till he goes to bed so I can check the locks. I take calls and answer doors, too, so I'm certain no one came in last night."

"Maybe Delancey let someone in while you were in another part of the house."

"No. At least nobody used the knocker. Anyway, when it got late I thought I'd see if he'd dozed off or something. When I got to the door I heard voices . . . just a mumble. It's a heavy door and the walls are thick, so I couldn't make out any words. But they seemed to be arguing, and Mr. Delancey sounded angry. Then I heard a thump on the floor. I was scared, but I had to see if he needed help. I tried the door, but by the time I got my keys out and opened it nobody was in the room but Mr. Delancey."

By this time I was following him into the cool depths of the basement. In the light of a 60-watt bulb I could make out dim reaches of dusty shelves and yawning bins. Walls and floors were of stone and crumbling cement.

"We don't use this part of the house anymore," my guide said.

I could see no sign of Gallagher. "But where's—?"

"They must be down in the wine cellar. Over this way." Jamison was moving toward another door deeper in the gloom.

As I followed him an unnerving thought popped into my mind and I glanced back at the bulb which now looked so futile and far away. For a second I was Fortunato following Montresor toward the beckoning Amontillado, and the chill I felt was

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

not merely the cold of the dew-glistening walls. The fantasy began to take form.

Was Jamison posing? What lay behind his far-fetched story? Two voices in a locked room—and no one but a corpse when the door is opened. With a shiver I saw things in a new light. Why a mystery at all? Of course someone else was in the house. Jamison himself. And now, here in the depths of a forgotten cellar—

Was he planning to murder me?

THESE THOUGHTS went leaping through my brain like frightened jackrabbits. They were dispelled an instant later as a protesting creak indicated Jamison had opened the door, and I immediately heard the unmistakable sound of a pickax striking stone. In a surge of relief my voice tumbled out unnaturally loud: "Hello, down there!"

Gallagher's welcome voice boomed up to me: "Doc Harper, hello!" As I reached the floor of the wine cellar, he added: "I figured you'd drop in."

This room was small and better illuminated. The flooring was of loose boards, some of which had been thrown to one side, exposing stony earth in which a shallow trench had already been dug out from one wall.

Gallagher, standing on the far side of the trench, introduced Moore of the telephone company, who had paused with lifted pickax. Then, as Jamison excused himself, I glanced at the houseman guiltily, wondering if he had an inkling of my absurd suspicions.

Dismissing the thought, I turned to Gallagher. "I have to confess my curiosity got the better of me."

"Well, I can tell you what we've rounded up so far. Do you remember, about thirty years ago, the old Blackstone system that merged with Bell? Delancey was the president. But there's no record in the old company, or the new one, either, that he ever had more than one phone in this house. Not even an extension."

"If he wanted it done off the books," I said, "I supposed he could have managed."

"Exactly. We located a retired stock checker who'd worked for the Blackstone outfit. He had reason to remember the man who'd made the installation here—a Luther Cobb. Cobb had been his bowling buddy. Anyway, Cobb was killed that afternoon on the way back to the plant."

"Killed? You mean murdered?"

"No, the court records say it was an accident. A moving van crashed into his pickup. Probably died instantly. But it silenced the one man in the world besides Delancey who knew what kind of setup was installed here. Another thing: Delancey's company had been bucking the competition for years. Then suddenly he decided to sell out. That decision came two days after Cobb was killed."

I turned it over in my mind. Was there a connection? Or were we fools in trying to see a pattern where none existed?

"The old boy cashed out," Gallagher continued, "and took his capital into Wall Street. From what I hear, he cleaned up."

Maybe there was a pattern. I could feel it now, as my mind raced around like a beagle on a wisp of scent. That was why Delancey had gone for the merger. Fresh capital. He had just put in a secret telephone. Had it given him access to new knowledge? Market information from a mysterious source? Had he contrived an accident to kill the one man who might know

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

or suspect his secret? Had he—

"The Feds are checking him now," Gallagher added. "They think he may be worth a billion."

The infallible Delancey, I thought. He had seemed to know in advance when stocks would rise or fall. Was it business acumen? Or was it foreknowledge?

Foreknowledge!

An incredible answer ballooned in my skull. Suppose . . . Lord! It was too preposterous to entertain, but as I tried to dismiss it the fantastic explanation blocked me on every hand: Suppose the telephone line extended into the future. Didn't Wells write about a time machine? Suppose it *were* possible, even if only by voice. We were doing it now, in a way, every time we heard the recorded voice of Caruso or other singers long since dead. Suppose Delancey had succeeded in reversing the principle, made contact with someone in the future—received market information which would be merely statistics in a later era. I began—

"I'll be damned!" Moore's ejaculation brought me back to reality. He was squatting in the trench, his fingers scraping at the dirt. "The conduit! Where's your light?"

Gallagher fumbled at his belt. With a click a bright cone splashed downward and three pairs of eyes riveted on the exposed length of half-inch pipe that extended for ten inches ahead of Moore's feet.

"It ends there," Gallather groaned.

Dirt flew beneath Moore's fingers. "The wires don't."

"Let me get in there."

He shoved the flashlight into my hand and elbowed Moore out of the ditch. In a moment he was on his haunches and the dirt was flying. Within seconds he gave a baffled grunt and held up about a foot of heavily taped wire ending in a small metal rod.

"It's a jack," Moore said.

"Maybe it's just a ground like radios used to have," I put in, "and the real line branched off somewhere."

"Out of the question," Gallagher growled. "We traced every inch of it."

"It must have been jacked into *something*," Moore said.

Gallagher scraped around at the point where the wire had terminated. "Feels like solid rock here," he said. "Bring that light closer."

I lowered the flash and then, as he brushed the spot clean, we saw it.

A small round hole drilled into the rock.

But it wasn't the hole that caught my eye and caused my jaw to sag. It was the bedrock itself.

My rockhound experience as a youth came flooding back. "It's clear calcite," I exclaimed. "With native copper."

In the depths of the crystal-like stone reddish glints were reflected from gnarly metallic threads that spiraled downward from the jack hole. "There's no native copper closer than the Keweenaw Peninsula."

"Where the hell's that?"

"Northern Michigan."

"Well, if this is copper, it's a damn sight closer than Michigan. Now what?"

Moore shrugged. "You'll need dynamite if you want to go any further. The line's jacked into bedrock."

"What does that mean?"

"Who knows? Native copper'll conduct impulses, but where to?"

Gallagher jammed the jack back into the hole. "No point in that," Moore said. "The connection was

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

broken when you pulled out the jack."

"Well, at least that's one thing we can check on. Call Jamison, Doc, and ask him to look."

My next words were born of impulse I would never be able to explain. Certainly there was no reason I should volunteer to do what would take Jamison only a minute in response to a hail.

"I'll go up myself."

"OK. But if the damned thing's still buzzing, use the other phone and call the loony bin. I want to reserve a room."

"Make it two," Moore said.

I hastened upward, pushed on now by a feeling of urgency, as if some denouement were about to occur and the slightest lagging on my part would result in my missing it forever.

Jamison was framed in the light at the top of the stairs. I wheeled past him and hurried toward the hall. My heart was thumping as I turned the brass knob of the study door. The exertion of those stairs, I reasoned, or was it something more than that? I had always lived in a fairly well-ordered world with a demarcation line between reality and fantasy that any sane mind could recognize. Was it possible subconsciously I knew that when I left that room my perspective would be forever lost, and never again would I be able to distinguish between myth and reality with any degree of conviction?

The door swung open. By daylight the room's forbidding atmosphere was gone. The window shades were high and light flooded in, bringing out the warm reds and browns of the leather-coverec chairs and the rows of silent books on the shelves behind them. A line of chalk on the floor now marked where the body had lain, but beyond that nothing appeared changed. On the wall I saw the receiver still hanging by its cord.

I strode toward it, feeling again the need for haste. My last few steps became a lunge, and my hand clutched the receiver and whipped it to my ear in a single motion.

For the second time that day I felt the chill of gooseflesh.

Bleakly, monotonously, the phantom bell was still, somewhere, grinding out its unending summons. I could read an evil satisfaction in the sound, a note that signaled the triumph of machine over man, its maker.

"Still ringing," I muttered, "just as I knew it would be."

How can I describe the interval that followed, or measure it in units of time? Like fantasies in the spiraling maelstrom that precedes the oblivion of ether, my thoughtstream sped inward past world after logical world, the logic of each in turn transforming that of the previous world into illogical gibberish. And ever pacing my flight was the maddening "br-rrrr . . . br-rrrr . . . br-rrrr" of the—

Good God!

It had stopped.

For a moment it seemed as if the earth itself had stopped—my heartbeat, my breathing, all movement of the city around me.

Had someone lifted the receiver?

Then, as I waited with every nerve end dilated, eternity ended. A voice came over the wire, far off, breathless, harried.

"Hello, hello. Is someone there? Quick. Can you hear me?"

"Y-yes, of course. Who—?"

Words gushed into my ear at fever speed: *"The phones've stopped. He'll know who did it. For the love of God hang up your receiver!"*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"But where—?"

"He broke his bargain, I'll break mine. Only you can cut the connection. I'll never get another chance. He'll hang up and they'll start ringing again in every corner of this mad place." Then hysterically, *"HE'S COMING! HANG UP YOUR—"*

The words shredded into a scream of agony, a scream that exploded in my brain like a bursting drill.

The scream died in a series of choking bubbles, and then, with every brittle nerve vibrating in protest, I heard it: The sound that has haunted me, has eaten like cancer into my memory.

Frosty laughter—bleak as the polar wind.

That was all. I heard a clike and then, once more, the interminable "br-rrrr . . . br-rrrr . . . br-rrrr" of the distant bell.

FOR AN AGE I stood there, holding the receiver woodenly. Then, as if with volition of its own, my hand moved toward the box on the wall. I scarcely was aware of the click as the receiver pulled down the hook and cut off my world from another.

For I knew now . . . A cosmic curtain had parted momentarily and I'd glimpsed a world of legend, a world of nightmare. And wonder swept me: Why do we scoff at the chronicles of folklore, why do we dismiss the age-old beliefs of our forebears? Can they *all* be figments? Tales of legendary pacts marched past as the reality of this modern counterpart throbbed in my brain. In whatever unfathomable manner it had been accomplished, the wealth of Midas had been bartered for a modern torment to be added to others in a realm as old as man.

I knew, too, what I had to tell the sergeant. What physician has not learned the value of an untruth? The unholy line was dead now. Let it remain so. I alone must carry the knowledge and the memory. For the first voice I had heard was one I knew well . . . the voice of a man who, like others before him, had made a pact with evil, a man whose body for hours now had lain cold in death . . . the voice of Peter Delancey.

And the odor, too, I knew. Burning sulphur. In an earlier age they called it brimstone.

—SHERWOOD SPRINGER

ON SALE NOW IN MAY AMAZING

SIGHT OF PROTEUS by **CHARLES SHEFFIELD, ALL THINGS TO ALL. . .** by **MACK REYNOLDS, SAINT FRANCIS NIGHT** by **GORDON EKLUND, IN THE ARCADE** by **LISA TUTTLE, CHARIOTEER** by **STEVE MILLER, YOU'VE COME A LONG WAY, BABY** by **VOL HALDEMAN.** and many new features.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THE TREASURE OF ODIREX

CHARLES SHEFFIELD

Sheffield returns from last issue's "Power Failure" with a story set in the year 1777, whose unlikely protagonist was described by Coleridge as possessing, "perhaps, a greater range of knowledge than any other man in Europe. . ."

ILLUSTRATED by LYDIA MOON

"THE FEVER will break near dawn. If she wakes before that, no food. Boiled water only, if she asks for drink. I will infuse a febrifuge now, that you can give in three hours time if she is awake and the fever has not abated."

The speaker rose heavily from the bedside and moved to the fireplace, where oil lamps illuminated the medical chest standing on an oak escritoire. He was grossly overweight, with heavy limbs and a fat, pock-marked face, and a full mouth from which the front teeth had long been lost. The jaw was jowly, and in need of a razor. Only the eyes belied the impression of coarseness and past disease. They were grey and patient, with a look of deep sagacity and a profound power of observation.

The other man in the room had been standing motionless by the fire, his eyes fixed on the restless form of the young woman lying on the bed. Now he bit his lip, and shook his head.

"I wish you could stay the night, Erasmus. It is midnight now. Are you sure that the fever will lessen?"

"As sure as a man can be, Jacob, when we deal with disease. I wish I could stay, but there is a bad case of puerperal fever in Rugeley that I must see tonight. Already the ways are becoming foul."

He looked ruefully down at his leather leggings, spattered with drying mud from the late November rain. "If anything changes for the worse, send Prindle after me. And before I go I'll leave you materials for tisanes, and instructions to prepare them."

He began to select from the medical chest, while his companion walked to the bedside and gazed unhappily at his wife as she tossed in fevered sleep. The man was tall and lean, with a dark, sallow complexion, deeply lined and channeled. Long years of intense sunlight had stamped a permanent frown on his brow, and a slight, continuous trembling in his hands told of other legacies of foreign service.

Erasmus Darwin looked at him sympathetically as he sorted the drugs

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

LICENSED TO UNESCO
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

he needed, then took paper and quill and prepared careful written instructions for their use.

"Attend now, Jacob," he said, as he sanded the written sheets. "There is one preparation here that I would normally insist on administering myself. These are dried tubers of aconite, cut fine. You must make an infusion for three hundred pulse beats, then let it cool before you use it. It serves as a febrifuge, to reduce fever, and also as a sudorific, to induce sweating. That is good for these cases. If the fever should continue past dawn, here is dried willow bark, for an infusion to lower body temperature."

"After dawn. Yes. And these two?" Jacob Pole held up the other packets.

"Use them only in emergency. If there should be convulsions, send for me at once, but give this as a tisane until I arrive. It is dried celandine, together with dried flowers of silverweed. And if there is persistent coughing, make a decoction of these, dried flowers of speedwell."

He looked closely at the other man and nodded slightly to himself as he saw the faint hand tremor and yellowish eyes. He rummaged again in the medical chest.

"And here is one for you, Jacob." He raised his hand, stifling the other's protest. "Don't deny it. I saw the signs again when I first walked in here tonight. Malaria and Jacob Pole are old friends, are they not? Here is cinchona, Jesuit-bark, for your use. Be thankful that I have it with me—there's little enough call for it on my usual rounds. Rheumatism and breech babies, that's my fate."

During his description of the drugs and their use, his voice had been clear and unhesitating. Now, at the hint of humor, his usual stammer was creeping back in. Jacob Pole was glad to hear it. It meant that the physician was confident, enough to permit his usual optimistic outlook to re-emerge.

"Come on, then, Erasmus," he said. "Your carriage should still be ready and waiting. I can't tell you how much I appreciate what you've done for us. First Milly, and now Elizabeth. One life can never repay for two, but you know I'm ready should you ever need help yourself."

The two men took a last look at the sleeping patient, then Jacob Pole picked up the medical chest and they left the room. As they did so, the housekeeper came in to maintain the vigil on Elizabeth Pole. They walked quietly past her, down the stairs and on to the front of the silent house. Outside, the night sky was clear, with a gibbous moon nearing the full. A hovering ground mist hid the fields, and the distant lights of Lichfield seemed diffuse and deceptively close. The sulky was waiting, the old horse standing patiently between the shafts and munching quietly at her nosebag.

"That's strange." Jacob Pole paused in his work of removing the mare's nosebag. He looked down the road to the south. "Do you hear it, Erasmus? Unless my ears are going, there's a horseman coming this way, along the low road."

"Coming here?"

"Must be. There's no other house between here and Kings Bromley. But I don't expect visitors at this hour. Did you promise to make any calls out that way?"

"Not tonight."

They stood in silence as the faint jingling of harness grew steadily louder. The rider who at last came into view seemed to be mounted on a legless horse, smoothly breasting the swirling ground mist. The Derbyshire

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

clay, still slick and moist from the afternoon rain, muffled the sound of the hooves. The rider approached like a phantom. As he grew closer they could see him swaying a little in the saddle, as though half-asleep. He cantered up to them and pulled aside the black face-cloth that covered his nose and mouth.

"I'm seeking Dr. Darwin. Dr. Erasmus Darwin." The voice was soft and weary, with the flat vowels of a northcountryman.

"Then you need seek no further." Jacob Pole stepped forward. "This is Dr. Darwin, and I am Colonel Pole. What brings you here so late?"

The other man stiffly dismounted, stretching his shoulders and bowing at the waist to relieve the cramped muscles of a long ride. He grunted in relief, then turned to Darwin.

"Your housekeeper finally agreed to tell me where you were, Doctor. My name is Thaxton, Richard Thaxton. I must talk to you."

"An urgent medical problem?"

Thaxton hesitated, looking warily at Jacob Pole. "Perhaps. Or worse." He rubbed at the black stubble on his long chin. " 'Canst thou not minister to a mind diseased?' "

"Better perhaps than Macbeth could." Erasmus Darwin stood for a moment, head hunched forward on his heavy shoulders. "Who suggested that you come to me?"

"Dr. Warren."

"Warren of London?" Darwin's voice quickened with interest. "I doubt that I can do anything for you that he cannot. Why did he not treat your problem himself?"

Again the other man hesitated. "If Dr. Warren is an old friend, I fear that I bring you bad news. He can no longer sustain his practice. His health is failing, and he confided in me his belief that he is consumptive."

"Then that is bad news indeed." Darwin shook his head sadly. "To my mind, Warren is the finest diagnostician in Europe. If he has diagnosed consumption in himself, the prospect is bleak indeed."

"He holds you to be his master, especially in diseases of the mind. Dr. Darwin, I have ridden non-stop from London, and I must get back to Durham as soon as possible. But I must talk with you. Dr. Warren offers you as my only hope."

Thaxton's hands were trembling with weariness as they held the bridle. Darwin scrutinized him closely, measuring the fatigue and the despair.

"We will talk, Mr. Thaxton, never fear. But I cannot stay here to do it. There is an urgent case of childbed fever six miles west of here. It cannot wait." He gestured at the carriage. "However, if you would be willing to squeeze into the sulky with me, we could talk as we travel. And there is a hamper of food there, that you look to be sorely in need of."

"What about my horse?"

"Leave that to me." Jacob Pole stepped forward. "I'll see he gets a rub-down and feed. Erasmus, I suggest that you come back here when you are done, and take some rest yourself. I can send one of the servants over to Lichfield, to tell your household that they can reach you here."

"Aye. It bids fair to be a long night. Say that I will be home before sunset tomorrow. This is a bad time of year for fevers and agues."

"No need to tell me that, Erasmus." Jacob Pole smiled ruefully and looked at his own shaking hand, as the other two men climbed into the carriage. As they moved off into the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

mist, he stirred himself with an effort and led the horse slowly to the stables at the rear of the house.

"IT IS a long and confusing story, Dr. Darwin. Bear with me if it seems at first as though I am meandering."

Food and brandy had restored Thaxton considerably. Both men had made good use of the hamper of food and drink balanced between them on their knees. Darwin wiped his greasy hands absent-mindedly on his woollen shawl, and turned his head to face Richard Thaxton.

"Take your time. Detail is at the heart of diagnosis, and in the absence of the patient—since it is clear that you are not he—the more that you can tell me, the better."

"Not 'he', Doctor. She. Three years ago my wife, Anna, went to see Dr. Warren. At that time we were living in the heart of London, hard by St. Mary le Bow. She had been feeling lacking in strength, and was troubled by a racking cough."

"With bleeding?"

"Thank God, no. But Dr. Warren was worried that she might become phthisic. He recommended that we move away from the London style of life, to one with more of country ways and fresh air."

Darwin nodded approvingly. "Warren and I have seldom disagreed on diagnosis, and less still on treatment. You took his advice?"

"Of course. We moved back to my family home, Heartsease, near Milburn in Cumbria."

"I know the area. Up in the high Fell country. Clean air, and clear sun. A good choice. But did it fail?"

"Not for my wife's general health, no. She became stronger and more robust. I could see the improvement, month by month. Then—about one year ago—there came another problem. She began to see visions."

Erasmus Darwin was silent for a long moment, while the carriage rolled steadily along the gravelled roads. "I see," he said at last. "Invisible to others, I take it?"

"Invisible to all, save Anna. Our house stands north of Milburn, facing out across Cross Fell. Late at night, in our bedroom, when the Helm stands on the Fell and the wind is strong from the north, she sees phantom lights moving on the Fell slopes, and hears crying in the wind."

"You have looked for them yourself?"

"I, and others. I have brought our servants upstairs to look also. We see nothing, but Anna is persistent."

"I see." Darwin paused again, reflective, then shrugged. "Even so, it does not sound like a matter for serious concern. She believes that she can see what you cannot. What harm is there in a will-'o-the-wisp? It does not interfere with your life."

"It did not." Thaxton turned directly to Darwin, intense and troubled. "Until three months ago. Then Anna found a book in Durham telling of the early history of our part of the country. Cross Fell had another name, long ago. It was known as Fiends Fell. According to legend, it was re-named Cross Fell when St. Augustine came with a cross to the Fell and drove out the fiends. But Anna says that she has seen the fiends herself, on two occasions. By full moonlight, and only when the Helm is on the Fell."

"Twice now you have mentioned the Helm. What is it?"

"Dense cloud, like a thunder-head. It sits as a bank, crouching over the top of Cross Fell. It does not move away, even when the wind sweeping

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

from the top of the Fell is strong enough in Milburn to overturn carts and uproot trees. Anna says that it is the source of the fiends."

Darwin nodded slowly. The two men rode on in silence for a while, both deep in thought.

"Nothing you have said so far suggests the usual mental diseases," Darwin said at last. "But the human mind is more complicated than we can guess. Tell me, has your wife any other fears or fancies? Any other fuel for her beliefs?"

"Only more legends." Thaxton shrugged apologetically. "There are other legends of the Fell. According to the writings of Thomas of Appleby, in Roman times a great king, Odirex, or Odiris, lived in the high country of the Fells. He acquired a great treasure. Somehow, he used it to banish the Romans from that part of the country, completely, so that they never returned."

"What was his treasure?"

"The legend does not tell. But according to Thomas of Appleby, Odirex hid his treasure on Cross Fell. Local folk say that it is there to this day, guarded by the fiends of the fell. Anna says that she has seen the guardians; that they are not of human form; and that they live on Cross Fell yet, and will sometime come down again."

Darwin had listened to this very closely, and was now sitting upright on the hard seat of the carriage. "A strange tale, indeed, and one that I have not heard before in all my reading of English myth and legend. Odirex, eh? A name to start trains of thought, if we will but remember our Latin. *Odii Rex*—the King of Hate. What else does Thomas of Appleby have to say about the King of Hate's Treasure?"

"Only that it was irresistible. But surely, Dr. Darwin, you are not taking these tales seriously? They are but the instruments that are turning my wife's mind away from sanity."

"Perhaps." Darwin relaxed and hunched low in his seat. "Perhaps. In any case, I would have to see your wife to make any real decision as to her condition."

"I can bring her here to see you, if you wish. But I must do it under some subterfuge, since she does not know that I am seeking assistance for her condition. As for money, I will pay any fee that you ask."

"No. Money is not an issue. Also, I want to see her at your home in Milburn." Darwin appeared to have made up his mind about something. "Look, I now have the responsibilities of my practice here, and as you can see they are considerable. However, I have reason to make a visit to York in a little more than two weeks time. I will have another doctor, my *locum tenens*, working here in my absence. If you will meet me in York, at a time and place that we must arrange, we can go on together to Milburn. Then perhaps I can take a look at your Anna, and give you my best opinion on her—and on other matters, too."

Darwin held up his hand, to stem Thaxton's words. "Now, no thanks. We are almost arrived. You can show your appreciation in a more practical way. Have you ever assisted in country medicine, two hours after midnight? Here is your chance to try it."

"THE ROOF of England, Jacob. Look there, to the east. We can see all the way to the sea."

Darwin was leaning out of the coach window, holding his wig on with one hand and drinking in the scenery, as they climbed slowly up

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the valley of the Tees, up from the eastern plain that they had followed north from the Vale of York. Jacob Pole shivered in the brisk east wind that blew through the inside of the coach, and huddled deeper into the leather greatcoat that hid everything up to his eyes.

"It's the roof, all right, blast it. Close that damn window. No man in his right mind wants to be out on the roof in the middle of December. I don't know what the devil I'm doing up here, when I could be home and warm in bed."

"Jacob, you insisted on coming, as you well know."

"Maybe. You can be the best doctor in Europe, Erasmus, and the leading inventor in the Lunar Club, but you still need a practical man to keep your feet on the ground."

Darwin grinned, intoxicated by the clear air of the fells. "Of course. The mention of treasure had nothing to do with it, did it? You came only to look after me."

"Hmph. Well, I wouldn't go quite so far as to say that. Damn it all, Erasmus, you know me. I've dived for pearls off the eastern Spice Islands; I've hunted over half the Americas for El Dorado; I've scrabbled after rubies in Persia and Baluchistan; and I've dug for diamonds all the way from Ceylon to Samarkand. And what have I got out of it? A permanent sunburn, a bum that's been bitten by all the fleas in Asia, and a steady dose of malaria three times a year. But I could no more resist coming here, when I heard Thaxton talk about Odirex's treasure, than you could . . . stop philosophizing."

Darwin laughed aloud. "Ah, you're missing the point, Jacob. Look out there." He waved a brawny arm at the Tees Valley, ascending with the river before them. "There's a whole treasure right here, for the taking. If I knew how to use them, there are plants for a whole new medical pharmacopoeia, waiting for our use. I'm a botanist, and I can't even name half of them. Hey, Mr. Thaxton." He leaned further out of the coach, looking up to the driver's seat above and in front of him.

Richard Thaxton leaned perilously over the edge of the coach. "Yes, Dr. Darwin?"

"I'm seeing a hundred plants here that don't grow in the lowlands. If I describe them to you, can you arrange to get me samples of each?"

"Easily. But I should warn you, there are many others that you will not even see from the coach. Look." He stopped the carriage, swung easily down, and went off to a mossy patch a few yards to one side. When he came back, bare-headed, dark hair blowing in the breeze, he carried a small plant with broad leaves and a number of pale green tendrils with blunt, sticky ends.

"There's one for your collection. Did you ever see or hear of anything like this?"

Darwin looked at it closely, smelled it, broke off a small piece of a leaf and chewed it thoughtfully. "Aye, I've not seen it for years, but I think I know what it is. Butterwort, isn't it? It rings a change on the usual order of things—animals eat plants, but this plant eats animals, or at least insects."

"That's right." Thaxton smiled. "Good thing it's only a few inches high. Imagine it ten feet tall, and you'd really have a 'Treasure of Odirex' that could have scared away the Romans."

"Good God." Jacob Pole was aghast. "You don't really think that there could be such a thing, do you—

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

up on Cross Fell?"

"Of course not. It would have been found long ago—there are shepherds up there every day, you know. They'd have found it."

"Unless it found them," said Pole gloomily. He retreated even further into his greatcoat. Thaxton climbed back into the driver's seat and they went on their way. The great expanse of the winter fells was spreading about them, a rolling sea of copper, sooty black and silver-grey. The land lay bleak, already in the grip of winter. At last, after three more hours of steady climbing, they came to Milburn. Thaxton leaned far over again, to shout into the interior of the coach. "Two more miles, and we'll be home."

The village of Milburn was small and windswept, a cluster of stone houses around the church and central common. Thaxton's coach seemed too big, out of scale with the mean buildings of the community. At the crossroads that led away to the neighboring village of Newbiggin, Thaxton halted the carriage and pointed to the great mass of Cross Fell, lying to the north-east. Darwin looked at it with interest, and even Jacob Pole, drawn by the sight of his potential treasure-ground, ventured out of his huddle of coats and shawls.

After a couple of minutes of silent inspection of the bleak prospect, rising crest upon crest to the distant, hidden summit, Thaxton shook the reins to drive on.

"Wait—don't go yet!" Darwin's sudden cry halted Thaxton just as he was about to start the coach forward.

"What is it, Dr. Darwin? Is something the matter?"

Darwin did not reply. Instead, he opened the carriage door, and despite his bulk swung easily to the ground. He walked rapidly across the common, where a boy about ten years old was sitting by a stone milestone. The lad was deformed of feature, with a broad, flattened skull and deep-set eyes. He was lightly dressed in the cast-off rags of an adult, and he did not seem to feel the cold despite the biting breeze.

The child started up at Darwin's approach, but did not run away. He was less than four feet tall, heavy-chested and bow-legged. Darwin stood before him and looked at him with a professional eye.

"What is it, Erasmus?" Jacob Pole had dismounted also and come hurrying after. "What's his disease?"

Darwin had placed a gentle hand on the boy's head and was slowly turning it from side to side. The child, puzzled but reassured by Darwin's calm manner and soft touch, permitted the examination without speaking.

"It is not disease, Jacob." Darwin shook his head thoughtfully. "At first I thought it must be, but the lad is quite healthy. Never in my medical experience have I seen such a peculiar physiognomy. Look at the strange bone structure of the skull, and the curious regression of the jaw. And see that odd curve, in the relation of the thoracic and cervical vertebrae." Darwin puffed out his full lips, and ran a gentle finger over the child's lumpy forehead. "Tell me, my boy, how old are you?"

The child did not reply. He looked at Darwin with soft, intelligent eyes, and made a strange, strangled noise high in his throat.

"You'll get no reply from Jimmy," said Thaxton, who had followed behind the other two men. "He's mute—bright enough, and he'll follow any instructions. But he can't speak."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Darwin nodded, and ran his hand lightly over the boy's throat and larynx. "Yes, there's something odd about the structure here, too. The hyoid bone is malformed, and the thyroid prominence is absent. Tell me, Mr. Thaxton, are the boy's parents from these parts of Cumbria?" Darwin smiled encouragingly at the lad, though his own lack of front teeth made that more frightening than reassuring. A piece of silver, pressed into the small hand, was more successful. The boy smiled back tentatively, and pointed upwards towards the Fell.

"See, he understands you very well," said Thaxton. "His mother is up on Dufton Fell, he says." He turned away, drawing the other two men after him, before he continued in a low voice. "Jimmy's a sad case. His mother's a shepherdess, Daft Molly Metcalf. She's a poor lass who doesn't have much in the way of wits. Just bright enough to tend the sheep, up on Dufton Fell and Cross Fell."

"And the father?" asked Darwin.

"God only knows. Some vagrant. Anyway, Jimmy's not much to look at, but his brain is all right. He'll never be much more than a dwarf, I fear, but there will always be work for him here in the village. He's trustworthy and obedient, and we've all grown used to the way he looks."

"He's certainly no beauty, though," said Jacob Pole. "That's a strange deformity. You know what he reminds me of? When I was in the Spice Islands, there was a creature that the Dutch called the Orange-Lord, or Orang-Laut, or some such name. It lived in the deep forest, and it was very shy, but I once saw a body that the natives brought in. The skull and bone structure reminded me of your Jimmy."

"It's a long way from the Spice Islands to Cross Fell, Colonel," said Thaxton. "And you can guess what Anna has been saying—that Daft Molly was impregnated by a fiend of the Fell, some diabolical incubus, and Jimmy is the devilish result. What do you think of that, Dr. Darwin?"

Erasmus Darwin had been listening absent-mindedly, from time to time turning back for another look at the boy. "I don't know what to think yet, Mr. Thaxton," he finally replied. "But I can assure you of one thing. The only way that a human woman bears children is from impregnation by a human male. Your wife's chatter about an incubus is unscientific piffle."

"Impregnation is not always necessary, Doctor. Are you not forgetting the virgin birth of Our Lord, Jesus Christ?"

"Don't get him started on that," said Jacob Pole hastily. "or we'll be here all day. You may not know it, Mr. Thaxton; but this is Erasmus Darwin, the doctor, the inventor, the philosopher, the poet, the everything—except the Christian."

Thaxton smiled. "I had heard as much, to tell the truth, from Dr. Warren. 'If you are wise,' he said, 'you will not dispute religion with Dr. Darwin. If you are wiser yet, you will not dispute anything with him.' "

The men climbed back into the coach and drove slowly on through Milburn, to Thaxton's house north of the village. Before they went inside the big, stone-built structure, they again took a long look at Cross Fell, rising vast to the north-east.

"It's clear today," said Thaxton. "That means that the Helm won't be on the Fell—Anna won't be seeing or hearing anything tonight. Dr. Darwin, I don't know what your diagnosis will be, but I swear to God that

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the next twenty-four hours will be the hardest for me of any that I can remember. Come in, now, and welcome to Heartsease."

Darwin did not speak, but he patted the other man sympathetically on the shoulder with a firm hand. They walked together to the front door of the house.

"THEY ARE TAKING an awfully long time." Richard Thaxton rose from his seat by the fire and began to pace the study, looking now and again at the ceiling.

"As they should be," said Jacob Pole reassuringly. "Richard, sit down and relax. I know Erasmus, and I've seen him work many times in the past. He has the greatest power of observation and invention of any man I ever met. He sees disease where others can see nothing—in the way a man walks, or talks, or stands, or even lies. And he is supremely thorough, and in the event of dire need, supremely innovative. I owe to him the lives of my wife, Elizabeth, and my daughter Milly. He will come down when he is satisfied, not before."

Thaxton did not reply. He stood at the window, looking out at the inscrutable bulk of Cross Fell. A strong north-east wind, harsh and gusting, bent the leafless boughs of the fruit trees in the kitchen garden outside the study window, and swirled around the isolated house.

"See up there," he said at last. "The Helm is growing. In another two hours the top of the Fell will be invisible."

Pole rose also and joined him by the window. At the top of the Fell, a solid bank of roiling cloud was forming, unmoved by the strengthening wind. As they watched, it grew and thickened, shrouding the higher slopes and slowly moving lower.

"Will it be there tonight?" asked Pole.

"Until dawn. Guarding the treasure. God, I'm beginning to talk like Anna. It's catching me, too."

"Has there ever been any real treasure on the Fell? Gold, or silver?"

"I don't know. Lead, there surely is. It has been mined since Roman times, and there are mine workings all over this area. As for gold, I have heard much talk of it, but talk is easy. I have never seen nuggets, or even dust."

Jacob Pole rubbed his hands together. "That's meat and drink to me, Richard. Fiends or no fiends, there's nothing I'd like better than to spend a few days prospecting around Cross Fell. I've travelled a lot further than this, to places a good deal more inhospitable, on much less evidence. Yes, and I've fought off a fair number of fiends, too—human ones."

"And you have found gold?"

Pole grimaced. "Pox on it, Richard, you would ask me that. Never, not a pinch big enough to cover a whore's modesty. But luck can change at any time. This may be it."

Richard Thaxton pushed his fingers through his black, bushy hair, and smiled at Jacob Pole indulgently. "I've often wondered what would take a man to the top of Cross Fell in mid-winter. I think I've found out. One thing I'll wager, you'll not get Dr. Darwin to go with you. He's carrying a bit too much weight for that sort of enterprise."

As he spoke, they heard the clump of footsteps on the stairs above them. Thaxton at once fell silent and his manner became tense and somber. When Erasmus Darwin entered, Thaxton raised his eyebrows

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

questioningly but did not speak.

"Sane as I am," said Darwin at once, smiling. "And a good deal saner than Jacob."

"—or than you, Richard," added Anna Thaxton, coming in lightly behind Darwin. She was a thin, dark-haired woman, with high cheekbones and sparkling grey eyes. She crossed the room and put her arms around her husband. "As soon as Dr. Darwin had convinced himself that I was sane, he confessed to me that he was not really here to test me for a consumptive condition, but to determine my mental state. Now—" she smiled smugly "—he wants to do some tests on *you*, my love."

Richard Thaxton pressed his wife to him as though he meant to crack her ribs. Then her final words penetrated, and he looked at her in astonishment.

"Me! You're joking. I've seen no fiends."

"Exactly," said Darwin. He moved over to the table by the study window, where an array of food dishes had been laid out. "You saw nothing. For the past hour, I have been testing your wife's sight and hearing. Both are phenomenally acute, especially at low levels. Now I want to know about yours."

"But others were present when Anna saw her fiends. Surely we are not all blind and deaf."

"Certainly, all are not. But Anna tells me that when she saw and heard her mysteries on Cross Fell, it was night and you alone were with her upstairs. You saw and heard nothing. Then when you brought others, they also saw and heard nothing. But they came from lighted rooms downstairs. It takes many minutes for human eyes to acquire their full night vision—and it is hard for a room full of people, no matter how they try, to remain fully silent. So, I say again, how good are *your* eyes and ears?"

"—and I tell you, they are excellent!" exclaimed Thaxton.

"—and I tell you, they are indifferently good!" replied Anna Thaxton. "Who cannot tell a rook from a blackbird at thirty paces, or count the sheep on Cross Fell?"

They still held each other close, arguing across each other's shoulder. Darwin looked on with amusement, quietly but systematically helping himself to fruit, clotted cream, Stilton cheese and West Indian sweetmeats from the side table.

"Come, Mr. Thaxton," he said at last. "Surely you are not more prepared to believe that your wife is mad, than believe yourself a little myopic? Short-sightedness is no crime."

Thaxton shrugged. "All right. All right." He held his wife at arms' length, his hands on her shoulders. "Anna, I've never won an argument with you yet, and if Dr. Darwin is on your side I may as well surrender early. Do your tests. But if you are right, what does that mean?"

Darwin munched on a candied quince, and rubbed his hands together in satisfaction. "Why, then we no longer have a medical problem, but something much more intriguing and pleasant. You see, it means that Anna is *really* seeing something up on Cross Fell, when the Helm sits on the upland. And that is most interesting to me—be it fiends, fairies, hobgoblins, or simple human skullduggery. Come, my equipment for the tests is upstairs. It will take about an hour, and we should be finished well before dinner."

As they left, Jacob Pole went again to the window. The Helm had grown. It stood now like a great, grey animal,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

crouching at the top of Cross Fell and menacing the nearer lowlands. Pole sighed.

"Human skullduggery?" he said to Anna Thaxton. "I hope not. I'll take fiends, goblins and all—if the Treasure of Odirex is up there with them. Better ghouls and gold together, than neither one."

"TONIGHT? YOU must be joking!"

"And why not tonight, Mr. Thaxton? The Helm sits on the Fell, the night is clear, and the moon is rising. What better time for Anna's nocturnal visitants?"

Richard Thaxton looked with concern at Darwin's bulk, uncertain how to phrase his thought. "Do you think it wise, for a man your age—?"

"—forty-six," said Darwin.

"—your age, to undergo exertion on the Fell, at night? You are not so young, and the effort will be great. You are not—lissom; and it—"

"I'm fat," said Darwin. "I regard that as healthy. Good food wards off disease. This world has a simple rule: eat or be eaten. I am not thin, and less agile than a younger man, but I have a sound constitution, and no ailment but a persistent gout. Jacob and I will have no problem."

"Colonel Pole also?"

"Try and stop him. Right, Jacob? He's been lusting to get up on that Fell, ever since he heard the magic word 'treasure', back in Lichfield. Like a youth, ready to mount his first—er—horse."

"I've noticed that," said Anna Thaxton. She smiled at Darwin. "And thank you, Doctor, for tempering your simile for a lady's ears. Now, if your mind is set on Cross Fell tonight, you will need provisions. What should they be?"

Darwin bowed his head, and smiled his ruined smile. "I have always observed, Mrs. Thaxton, that in practical decision-making, men cannot compare with women. We will need food, shielded lamps, warm blankets, and tinder and flint."

"No weapons, or crucifix?" asked Richard Thaxton.

"Weapons, on Cross Fell at night, would offer more danger to us than to anyone else. As for the crucifix, it has been my experience that it has great influence—on those who are already convinced of its powers. Now, where on the Fell should we take up our position?"

"If you are going," said Thaxton suddenly, "then I will go with you. I could not let you wander the Fell, alone."

"No. You must stay here. I do not think that we will need help, but if I am wrong we rely on you to summon and lead it. Remain here with Anna. We will signal you—three lantern flashes from us will be a call for help, four a sign that all is well. Now, where should we position ourselves? Out of sight, but close to the lights you saw."

"Come to the window," said Anna Thaxton. "See where the spur juts out, like the beak of an eagle? That is your best waiting point. The lights show close there, when the fiends of the Fell appear. They return there, before dawn. You will not be able to see the actual point of their appearance from the spur. Keep a watch on our bedroom. I will show a light there if the fiends appear. When that happens, skirt the spur, following westward. After a quarter of a mile or so the lights on the Fell should be visible to you."

As she was speaking, the sound of the dinner gong rang through the house.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"I hope," she continued. "That you will be able to eat something, although I know you must be conscious of the labors and excitement of the coming night."

Erasmus Darwin regarded her with astonishment. "Something? Mrs. Thaxton. I have awaited the dinner bell for the past hour, with the liveliest anticipation. I am famished. Pray, lead the way. We can discuss our preparations further while we dine."

"WE SHOULD HAVE brought a timepiece with us, Erasmus. I wonder what the time is. We must have been here three or four hours already."

"A little after midnight, if the moon is keeping to her usual schedule. Are you warm enough?"

"Not too bad. Thank God for these blankets. It's colder than a witch's tit up here. How much longer? Suppose they don't put in an appearance at all? Or the weather changes? It's already beginning to cloud up a little."

"Then we'll have struggled up here and been half frozen for nothing. We could never track them with no moon. We'd kill ourselves, walking the Fell blind."

The two men were squatted on the hillside, facing south-west towards Heartsease. They were swaddled in heavy woollen blankets, and their exhaled breath rose white before them. In the moonlight they could clearly see the village of Milburn, far below, etched in black and silver. The Thaxton house stood apart from the rest, lamps showing in the lower rooms but completely dark above. Between Darwin and Pole sat two shielded oil lanterns. Unless the side shutters were unhooked and opened, the lanterns were visible only from directly above.

"It's a good thing we can see the house without needing any sort of spyglass," said Pole, slipping his brass brandy flask back into his coat after a substantial swig. "Holding it steady for a long time when it's as cold as this would be no joke. If there are fiends living up here, they'll need a fair stock of Hell-fire with them, just to keep from freezing. Damn those clouds."

He looked up again at the moon, showing now through broken streaks of cover. As he did so, he felt Darwin's touch on his arm.

"There it is, Jacob," he breathed. "In the bedroom. Now, watch for the signal."

They waited, tense and alert, as the light in the window dimmed, returned, and dimmed again. After a longer absence, it came back once more, then remained bright.

"In the usual place, where Anna hoped they might be," said Darwin. "Show our lantern, to let Thaxton know we've understood their signal. Then let's be off, while the moon lights the way."

The path skirting the tor was narrow and rocky, picked out precariously between steep screes and jagged outcroppings. Moving cautiously and quietly, they tried to watch both their footing and the fell ahead of them. Jacob Pole, leading the way, suddenly stopped.

"There they are," he said softly.

Three hundred yards ahead, where the rolling cloud bank of the Helm dipped lower to meet the broken slope of the scarp face, four yellow torches flickered and bobbed. Close to each one, bigger and more diffuse, moved a blue-green phosphorescent glow.

The two men edged closer. The blue-green glows gradually resolved

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

themselves to squat, misshapen forms, humanoid but strangely incomplete.

"Erasmus," whispered Jacob. "They are headless!"

"I think not," came the soft answer. "Watch closely, when the torches are close to their bodies. You can see that the torch light reflects from their heads—but there is no blue light shining there. Their bodies alone are outlined by it."

As he spoke, a despairing animal scream echoed over the Fell. Jacob Pole gripped Darwin's arm fiercely.

"Sheep," said Darwin tersely. "Throat cut. That bubbling cry is blood in the windpipe. Keep moving towards them, Jacob. I want to get a good look at them."

After a moment's hesitation, Pole again began to move slowly forward. But now the lights were moving steadily uphill, back towards the shrouding cloud bank of the Helm.

"Faster, Jacob. We've got to keep them in sight and be close to them before they go into the cloud. The light from their torches won't carry more than a few yards in that."

Darwin's weight was beginning to take its toll. He fell behind, puffing and grunting, as Pole's lanky figure loped rapidly ahead, around the tor and up the steep slope. He paused once and looked about him, then was off uphill again, into the moving fog at the edge of the Helm. Darwin, arriving at last at the same spot, could see no sign of him. Chest heaving, he stopped to catch his breath.

"It's no good." Pole's voice came like a disembodied spirit, over from the left of the hillside. A second later he suddenly emerged from the cloud bank. "They vanished into thin air, right about here. Just like that." He snapped his fingers. "I can't understand how they could have gone so fast. The cloud isn't so thick here. Maybe they can turn to air."

Darwin sat down heavily on a flat-topped rock. "More likely they snuffed their torches."

"But then I'd still have seen the body-glow."

"So let's risk the use of the lanterns, and have a good look round here. There should be some trace of them. It's a long way back to Heartsease, and I don't fancy this climb again tomorrow night."

They opened the shutters of the lanterns, and moved cautiously about the hillside. Darwin knew that the Thaxtons would be watching from Heartsease, and puzzling over what they had seen. He interrupted his search long enough to send a signal: four lantern flashes—all goes well.

"Here's the answer." Jacob Pole had halted fifty feet away, in the very fringe of the Helm. "I ought to have guessed it, after the talk that Thaxton and I had earlier. He told me yesterday that there are old workings all over this area. Lead, this one, or maybe tin."

The mine shaft was set almost horizontally into the hillside, a rough-walled tunnel just tall enough for a crouching man. Darwin stooped to look at the rock fragments inside the entrance.

"It's lead," he said, holding the lantern low. "See, this is galena, and this is blue fluorspar—the same Blue John that we find back in Derbyshire. And here is a lump of what I take to be barytes—heavy spar. Feel the weight of it. There's been lead mines up here on the Fells for two thousand years, since before the Romans came to Britain, but I thought they were all disused now. Most of them are miles north and east of this."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"I doubt that this one is being used for lead mining," replied Jacob Pole. "And I doubt if the creatures that we saw are lead miners. Maybe it's my malaria, playing up again because it's so cold here." He shivered all over. "But I've got a feeling of evil when I look in that shaft. You know the old saying: iron bars are forged on Earth, gold bars are forged in Hell. That's the way to the treasure, in there. I know it."

"Jacob, you're too romantic. You see four poachers killing a sheep, and you have visions of a treasure trove. What makes you think that the Treasure of Odirex is gold?"

"It's the natural assumption. What else would it be?"

"I could speculate. But I will wager it is not gold. That wouldn't have served to get rid of the Romans. Remember the Danegeld—that didn't work, did it?"

As he spoke, he was craning forward into the tunnel, the lantern held out ahead of him.

"No sign of them in here." He sniffed. "But this is the way they went. Smell the resin? That's from their torches. Well, I suppose that is all for tonight. Come on, we'd best begin the descent back to the house. It is a pity we cannot go further now."

"Descent to the house? Of course we can follow them, Erasmus. That's what we came for, isn't it?"

"Surely. But on the surface of the Fell, not through pit tunnels. We lack ropes and markers. But now that we know exactly where to begin, our task is easy. We can return here tomorrow with men and equipment, by daylight—perhaps we can even bring a tracking hound. All we need to do now is to leave a marker here, that can be seen easily when we come here again."

"I suppose you're right." Pole shrugged, and turned disconsolately for another look at the tunnel entrance. "Damn it, Erasmus, I'd like to go in there, evil or no evil. I hate to get this far and then turn tail."

"If the Treasure of Odirex is in there, it has waited for you for fifteen hundred years. It can wait another day. Let us begin the descent."

They retraced their steps, Jacob very reluctantly, to the downward path. In a few dozen paces they were clear of the fringes of the Helm. And there they stopped. While they had examined the entrance to the mine, the cloud cover had increased rapidly. Instead of seeing a moon shining strongly through light, broken cloud, they were limited to occasional fleeting glimpses through an almost continuous mass of clouds.

Jacob Pole shrugged, and looked slyly at Darwin. "This is bad, Erasmus. We can't go down in this light. It would be suicide. How long is it until dawn?"

"Nearly four hours, at a guess. It's bad luck, but we are only a week from winter solstice. There's nothing else for it, we must settle down here and make the best of it, until dawn comes and we have enough light to make a safe descent."

"Aye, you're right." Jacob Pole turned and looked thoughtfully back up the hill. "Since we're stuck here for hours, Erasmus, wouldn't it make sense to use the time, and take a quick look inside the entrance of the mine? After all, we do have the lanterns—and it may well be warmer inside."

"Or drier, or any other of fifty reasons you could find for me, eh?" Darwin held his lantern up to Pole's face, studying the eyes and the set of the mouth. He sighed. "I don't know

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

if you're shivering now with excitement or malaria, but you need warmth and rest. I wonder now about the wisdom of this excursion. All right. Let us go back up to the mine, on two conditions: we descend again to Heartsease at first light, and we take no risks of becoming lost in the mine."

"I've been in a hundred mines, all over the world, and I have yet to get lost in one. Let me go first. I know how to spot weak places in the supports."

"Aye. And if there's treasure to be found—which I doubt—I'd not be the one to deprive you of the first look."

Jacob Pole smiled. He placed one lantern on the ground, unshuttered. "Let this stay here, so Richard and Anna can see it. Remember, we promised to signal them every three hours that all is well. Now, let's go to it—fiends or no fiends."

He turned to begin the climb back to the abandoned mine. As he did so, Darwin caught the expression on his face. He was nervous and pale, but in his eyes was the look of a small child approaching the door of a toyshop.

ON A second inspection, made this time with the knowledge that they would be entering and exploring it, the mine tunnel looked much narrower and the walls less secure. Jacob, lantern partially shuttered to send a narrow beam forward, led the way. They went cautiously into the interior of the shaft. After a slight initial upward slant, the tunnel began to curve down, into the heart of the hill. The walls and roof were damp to the touch, and every few yards small rivulets of water ran steadily down the walls, glistening like a layer of ice in the light of the lantern. Thirty paces on, they came to a branch in the tunnel. Jacob Pole bent low and studied the uneven floor.

"Left, I think," he whispered. "What will we do if we meet the things that live here?"

"You should have asked the question before we set out," replied Darwin softly. "As for me, that is exactly what I am here for. I am less interested in any treasure."

Jacob Pole stopped, and turned in the narrow tunnel. "Erasmus, you never cease to amaze me. I know what drives *me* on, what makes me willing to come into a place like this at the devil's dancing-hour. And I know that I'm in a cold sweat of fear and anticipation. But why aren't *you* terrified? Don't you think a meeting with the fiends would carry great danger for us?"

"Less danger than you fear. I assume that these creatures, like ourselves, are of natural origin. If I am wrong on *that*, my whole view of the world is wrong. Now, these fiends hide on the Fell, and they come out only at night. There are no tales that say they kill people, or capture them. So I believe that *they* fear *us*—far more than we fear them."

"Speak for yourself," muttered Pole.

"Remember," Darwin swept on, "when there is a struggle for living space, the stronger and fiercer animals drive out the weaker and more gentle—who then must perforce inhabit a less desirable habitat if they are to survive. For example, look at the history of the tribes that conquered Britain. In each case—"

"Sweet Christ!" Jacob Pole looked round him nervously. "Not a lecture, Erasmus. This isn't the time or the place for it. And not so loud! I'll take the history lesson some other time."

He turned his back and led the way

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

into the left branch of the tunnel. Darwin sniffed, then followed. He was almost fat enough to block the tunnel completely, and had to walk very carefully. After a few steps he stopped again and looked closely at a part of the tunnel wall that had been shored up with rough timbers.

"Jacob, bring the light back for a moment, would you? This working has been used recently—new wood in some of the braces. And look at this."

"What is it?"

"Sheep wool, caught on the splintered wood here. It's still dry. We're on the correct path all right. Keep going."

"Aye. But what now?"

Pole pointed the beam from the lantern ahead to where the tunnel broadened into a domed chamber with a smooth floor. They walked forward together. At the other side of the chamber was a deep crevasse. Across it, leading to a dark opening on the other side, ran a bridge of rope guides and wooden planks, secured by heavy timbers buttressed between floor and ceiling. Pole shone his lantern across the gap, into the tunnel on the other side, but there was nothing to be seen there. They walked together to the edge.

"It looks sturdy enough. What do you think, Erasmus?"

"I think we have gone far enough. It would be foolhardy to risk a crossing. What lies below?"

Pole swung the lantern to throw the beam downward. The pit was steep-sided. About eight feet below the brink lay black, silent water, its surface smooth and unrippled. To right and left, the drowned chasm continued as far as the lantern beam would carry. Pole swung the light back to the bridge, inspecting the timbers and supporting ropes.

"Seems solid to me. Why don't I take a quick look at the other side, while you hold the lantern."

Darwin did not reply at once. He was staring down into the crevasse, a puzzled frown on his heavy face.

"Jacob, cover the lantern for a moment. I think I can see something down there, like a faint shining."

"Like gold?" The voice was hopeful. Pole shuttered the lantern and they stared in silence into the darkness. After a few moments, it became more visible to them. An eerie, blue-green glow lit the pit below, beginning about three feet below the lip and continuing to the water beneath. As their eyes adjusted, they began to see a faint pattern to the light.

"Jacob, it's growing there. It must be a moss, or a fungus. Or am I going blind?"

"It's a growth. But how can a living thing glow like that?"

"Some fungi shine in the dark, and so do some animals—glow-worms, and fireflies. But I never heard of anything like this growth. It's in regular lines—as though it had been set out purposely, to provide light at the bridge. Jacob, I must have a sample of that!"

In the excited tone of voice, Pole recognized echoes of his own feelings when he thought about hunting for treasure. Darwin knelt on the rocky floor, then laboriously lowered himself at full length by the side of the chasm.

"Here, let me do that, Erasmus. You're not built for it."

"No. I can get it. You know, this is the same glow that we saw on the creatures on Cross Fell."

He reached over the edge. His groping fingers were ten inches short of the highest growth. Grunting with the effort, Darwin took hold of the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

loose end of a trailing rope from the bridge, and levered himself farther over the edge.

"Erasmus, don't be a fool. Wait unitl we can come back here tomorrow, with the others."

Darwin grunted again, this time in triumph. "Got it."

The victory was short-lived. As he spoke, the hemp of the rope, rotted by many years of damp, disintegrated in his grasp. His body, off-balance, tilted over the edge. With a startled oath and a titanic splash, Darwin plunged head-first into the dark water beneath.

"Erasmus!" Jacob Pole swung around and groped futilely in the darkness for several seconds. He at last located the shuttered lantern, opened it and swung its beam onto the surface of the pool. There was no sign of Darwin. Pole ripped off his greatcoat and shoes. He stepped to the edge, hesitated for a moment, then took a deep breath and jumped feet-first into the unkown depths of the black, silent pool.

"MORE THAN three hours now. They should have signalled."

"Perhaps they did." Richard Thaxton squinted out of the window at the dark hillside.

"No. The lantern has been steady. I'm worried, Richard. See, they set it exactly where the lights of the fiends disappeared into the Helm." Anna shook her head unhappily. "It must be freezing up on Cross Fell tonight. I just can't believe that they would sit there for three hours without moving or signalling, unless they were in trouble."

"Nor can I." Thaxton opened the window and stuck his head out. He stared at the bleak hillside. "It's no good, Anna. Even when the moon was up I couldn't see a thing up there except for the lantern—and I can only just see that when you tell me where to look. Let's give it another half hour. If they don't signal, I'll go up after them."

"Richard, be reasonable. Wait until dawn. You'll have an accident yourself if you go up there in the dark—you know your eyes aren't good enough to let you be sure-footed, even by full moonlight."

The freezing wind gusted in through the open window. Thaxton pulled it closed. "At dawn. I suppose you're right. I'd best check the supplies now. I'll take medicine and splints, but I hope to God we won't be needing them." He stood up. "I'll tell two of the gardeners that we may have to make a rescue trip on the Fell at first light. Now, love, you try and get some sleep. You've been glued to that window most of the night."

"I will." Anna Thaxton smiled at her husband as he left the room. But she did not move from her vigil by the window, nor did her eyes move from the single point of light high on the bleak slopes of Cross Fell.

THE FIRST SHOCK was the cold of the water, enfolding and piercing his body like an iron maiden. Jacob Pole gasped as the air was driven from his lungs, and flinched at the thought of total immersion. Then he realized that he was still standing, head clear of the surface. The pool was less than five feet deep.

He moved around in the water, feeling with his stockinged feet until he touched a soft object on the bottom. Bracing himself, he filled his lungs and submerged to grope beneath the surface. The cold was frightful. It numbed his hands instantly, but he grasped awkwardly at Darwin's

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

arm and shoulder, and hoisted the body to the level of his own chest. Blinking water from his eyes, he turned the still form so that its head was clear of the surface. Then he stood there shuddering, filled with the awful conviction that he was supporting a corpse.

After a few seconds, Darwin began to cough and retch. Pole muttered a prayer of relief and hung on grimly until the spasms lessened.

"What happened?" Darwin's voice was weak and uncertain.

"You fell in head-first. You must have banged your head on the bottom." Pole's reply came through chattering teeth. His arms and hands had lost all feeling.

"I'm sorry, Jacob." Darwin was racked by another spell of coughing. "I behaved like an absolute fool." He roused himself. "Look, I can stand now. We'd better get out of here before we freeze."

"Easier said than done. Look at the height of the edge. And I see no purchase on either side."

"We'll have to try it anyway. Climb on my shoulders and see if you can reach."

Scrabbling with frozen hands on the smooth rock face, Pole clambered laboriously to Darwin's shoulders, leaned against the side of the pit and reached upwards. His straining fingertips were a foot short of the lip. He felt in vain for some hold on the rock. Finally he swore and slid back into the icy water.

"No good. Can't reach. We're stuck."

"We can't afford to be. An hour in here will kill us. This water must be snow-melt from the Fell. It's close to freezing."

"I don't give a damn where it came from—and I'm well aware of its temperature. What now, Erasmus? The feeling is going out of my legs."

"If we can't go up, we must go along. Let's follow the pool to the left here."

"We'll be moving away from the lantern light up there."

"We can live without light, but not without heat. Come on, Jacob."

They set off, water up to their necks. After a few yards it was clear that the depth was increasing. They reversed their steps and moved in the other direction along the silent pool. The water level began to drop gradually as they went, to their chests, then to their waists. By the time it was down to their knees they had left the light of the lantern far behind, and were wading on through total darkness. At last, Jacob Pole bent forward and touched his fingers to the ground.

"Erasmus, we're out of the water completely. It's quite dry underfoot. Can you see anything?"

"Not a glimmer. Stay close. We don't want to get separated here."

Pole shivered violently. "I thought that was the end. What a way to have gone—stand until our strength had gone, then down, like trapped rats in a sewer pipe."

"Aye. I didn't care for the thought. 'O Lord, methought what pain it was to drown, what dreadful noise of waters in my ears, what sights of ugly death within my eyes.' At least poor Clarence smothered in a livelier liquid than black Fell water. Jacob, do you have your brandy flask? Your hand is ice."

"Left it in my greatcoat, along with the tinder and flint. Erasmus, I can't go much further. That water drained all my strength away."

"Pity there's not more flesh on your bones." Darwin halted and placed his

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

hand on Pole's shoulder, feeling the shuddering tremors that were shaking the other's skinny frame. "Jacob, we have to keep moving. To halt now is to die, until our clothes become dry. Come, I will support you."

The two men stumbled blindly on, feeling their way along the walls. All sense of direction was quickly lost in the labyrinth of narrow, branching tunnels. As they walked, Darwin felt warmth and new life slowly begin to diffuse through his chilled body. But Pole's shivering continued, and soon he would have fallen without Darwin's arm to offer support.

After half an hour more of wandering through the interminable tunnels, Darwin stopped again and put his hand to Pole's forehead. It burned beneath his touch.

"I know, 'Rasmus, you don't need to tell me." Pole's voice was faint. "I've felt this fever before—but then I was safe in bed. I'm done for. No Peruvian-bark for me here on Cross Fell."

"Jacob, we *have* to keep going. Bear up. I've got cinchona in my medical chest, back at the house. We'll find a way out of here before too long. Just hang on, and let's keep moving."

"Can't do it." Pole laughed. "Wish I could. I'm all ready for a full military funeral, by the sound of it. I can hear the fife and drum now, ready to play me out. They're whispering away there, inside my head. Let me lie down, and have some peace. I never warranted a military band for my exit, even if it's only a ghostly one."

"Hush, Jacob. Save your strength. Here, rest all your weight on me." Darwin bent to take Pole's arm across his shoulder, supported him about the waist, and began to move forward again. His mood was somber. Pole needed medical attention—promptly—or death would soon succeed delirium.

Twenty seconds later, Darwin stopped dead, mouth gaping and eyes staring into the darkness. He was beginning to hear it, too—a faint, fluting tone, thin and ethereal, punctuated by the harsh deeper tone of drums. He turned his head, seeking some direction for the sound, but it was too echoing and diffuse.

"Jacob—can you tell me where it seems to be coming from?"

The reply was muttered and unintelligible. Pole, his body fevered and shaken with ague, was not fully conscious. Darwin had no choice but to go forward again, feeling his way along the damp, slick walls with their occasional timber support beams. Little by little, the sound was growing. It was a primitive, energetic music, shrill pan-pipes backed by a taut, rhythmic drum-beat. At last Darwin also became aware of a faint reddish light, flickering far along the tunnel. He laid Pole's semi-conscious body gently on the rocky floor. Then, light-footed for a man of his bulk, he walked silently towards the source of the light.

The man-made tunnel he was in emerged suddenly into a natural chimney in the rock, twenty yards across and of indefinite height. It narrowed as it went up and up, as far as the eye could follow. Twenty feet above, on the opposite side from Darwin, a broad, flat ledge projected from the chimney wall.

Darwin stepped clear of the tunnel and looked up. Two fires, fuelled with wood and peat, burned on the ledge and lit the chimney with an orange-red glow. Spreading columns of smoke, rising in a slight updraft, showed that the cleft in the rock

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

served as a chimney in the other sense. Behind the fires, a group of dark figures moved on the ledge to the wild music that echoed from the sheer walls of rock.

Darwin watched in fascination the misshapen forms that provided a grotesque back-drop to the smoky, flickering fires. There was a curious sense of regularity, of hypnotic ritual, in their ordered movements. A man less firmly rooted in rational convictions would have seen the fiends of Hell, capering with diabolic intent, but Darwin looked on with an analytical eye. He longed for a closer view of an anatomy so oddly distorted from the familiar human form.

The dancers, squat and shaggy, averaged no more than four feet in height. They were long-bodied and long-armed, and naked except for skirts and head-dresses. But their movements, seen through the curtain of smoke and firelight, were graceful and well-coordinated. The musicians, set back beyond the range of the firelight, played on and the silent dance continued.

Darwin watched, until the urgency of the situation again bore in on him. Jacob had to have warmth and proper care. The dancers might be ferocious aggressors, even cannibals; but whatever they were, they had fire. Almost certainly, they would also have warm food and drink, and a place to rest. There was no choice—and, deep inside, there was also the old, overwhelming curiosity.

Darwin walked forward until he was about twenty feet from the base of the ledge. He planted his feet solidly, legs apart, tilted his head back and shouted up to the dancers.

"IT'S NO GOOD, Anna. Not a sign of them." Richard Thaxton slumped on the stone bench in the front yard, haggard and weary. "They must have gone up, into the Helm. There's not a thing we can do for them until it lifts."

Anna Thaxton looked at her husband with a worried frown. His face was pale and there were dark circles under his eyes. "Love, you did all you could. If they got lost on the Fell, they'd be sensible enough to stay in one place until the Helm moves off the highlands. Where did you find the lantern—in the same place as I saw it last night?"

"The same place exactly. There." Thaxton pointed a long arm at the slope of Cross Fell. "The trouble is, that's right where the Helm begins. We couldn't see much of anything. I think it's thicker now than it was last night."

He stood up wearily and began to walk towards the house. His steps were heavy and dragging on the cobbled yard. "I'm all in. Let me get a hot bath and a few hours sleep, and if the Fell clears by evening we'll go up again. Damn this weather." He rubbed his hand over his shoulder. "It leaches a man's bones to chalk."

Anna watched her husband go inside, then she stooped and began collecting the packages of food and medicine that Richard in his weariness had dropped carelessly to the floor. As she rose, arms full, she found a small figure by her side.

"What is it, Jimmy?" The deformed lad had been leaning by the wall of the house, silent as always, listening to their conversation.

He tugged at her sleeve, then pointed to the Fell. As usual, he was lightly dressed, but he seemed quite unaware of the cold and the light drizzle. His eyes were full of urgent meaning.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"You heard what Mr. Thaxton said to me?" asked Anna. Jimmy nodded. Again he tugged at her arm, pulling her towards the Fell. Then he puffed out his cheeks and hunched his misshapen head down on his shoulders. Anna laughed. Despite Jimmy's grotesque appearance, he had somehow managed a creditable impersonation of Erasmus Darwin.

"And you think you know where Dr. Darwin is?" said Anna.

The lad nodded once more, and tapped his chest. Again, he pointed to Cross Fell. Anna hesitated, looking back at the house. After the long climb and a frantic four-hour search, Richard was already exhausted. It would serve no purpose to interrupt his rest.

"Let me go inside and write a note for Mr. Thaxton," she said. "Here, you take the food and medicine. We may need them." She handed the packages to Jimmy. "And I'll go and get warm clothing for both of us from the house. How about Colonel Pole?"

Jimmy smiled. He drew himself up to his full height of three feet nine-inches. Anna laughed aloud. The size and build were wrong, but the angular set of the head and the slightly trembling hands were without question Jacob Pole.

"Give me five minutes," she said. "Then you can lead the way. I hope you are right—and I hope we are in time."

AT DARWIN'S HAIL, the dancers froze. In a few seconds, pipe and drum fell silent. There was a moment of suspense, while the tableau on the ledge held, a frieze of demons against the dark background of the cave wall. Then the scene melted to wild confusion. The dancers milled about, most hurrying back beyond the range of the firelight, a few others creeping forward to the edge to gaze on the unkempt figure below.

"Do you understand me?" called Darwin.

There was no reply. He cursed softly. How to ask for help, when a common language was lacking? After a few moments he turned, went rapidly back into the tunnel, and felt his way to where Jacob Pole lay. Lifting him gently, he went back to the fire-lit chamber and stood there silently, the body of his unconscious friend cradled in his arms.

There was a long pause. At last, one of the fiends came to the very edge of the ledge and stared intently at the two men. After a second of inspection he turned and clucked gently to his companions. Three of them hurried away into the darkness. When they returned, they bore a long coil of rope which they cast over the edge of the ledge. The first fiend clucked again. He swung himself over the edge and climbed nimbly down, prehensile toes gripping the rope.

At the base he halted. Darwin stood motionless. At last, the other cautiously approached. His face was a devil-mask, streaked with red ochre from mouth to ears—but the eyes were soft and dark, deep-socketed beneath the heavy brow.

Darwin held forward Pole's fevered body. "My friend is sick," he said. The other started back at his voice, then again came slowly closer.

"See, red-man," said Darwin. "He burns with fever." Again, he nodded at Pole's silent form.

The fiend came closer yet. He looked at Pole's face, then put a hesitant hand out to feel the forehead. He nodded, and muttered to himself. He felt for the pulse in Pole's scrawny neck and grunted unhappily.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Darwin looked at him with an approving eye. "Aye, doctor," he said quietly. "See the problem? If we don't get him back home, to where I can give him medicine and venesection, he'll be dead in a few hours. What can you do for us, red-man?"

The fiend showed no sign of understanding Darwin's speech, but he looked at the other with soft, intelligent eyes. Darwin, no Adonis at the best of times, was something to look at. His clothes, wrinkled and smeared, hung like damp rags on his corpulent body. He had lost hat and wig in his descent into the pool, and his face was grimed and filthy from their travels through the tunnels of the mine. On his left hand, a deep cut had left streaks of dried blood along wrist and sleeve.

Darwin stood there steadily, heedless of his appearance. The fiend finally completed his inspection. He took Dariwn by the arm and led him to the foot of the ledge. After slipping the rope around Jacob Pole's body and making it fast, he called a liquid phrase to the group above. The fiends on the ledge hoisted Pole to the top and then—with considerably greater effort—did the same for Darwin. The red-smeared fiend shinned up lightly after them. The others, taking the rope with them, quietly hurried away into the dark tunnel that led from the cave.

Together, Darwin and the fiend lifted Jacob Pole and laid him gently on a heap of sheepskins and rabbit furs. The red-man then also hurried away into the darkness. For the first time, Darwin was alone and could take a good look around him on the ledge.

The area was a communal meeting-place and eating-place. Two sheep carcases, butchered and dressed, hung from a wooden tripod near one of the fires. Pole lay on his pile of furs about ten feet from the other fire, near enough for a comforting warmth to be cast on the sick man. Darwin walked over to the large black pot that nestled in the coals there. He bent over and sniffed it. Hot water. Useful, but not the source of the tantalizing smell that had filled his nostrils. He walked to the other fire, where an identical pot had been placed. He sniffed again. His stomach rumbled sympathetically. It was mutton broth. Darwin helped himself with the clay ladle and sipped appreciatively while he completed his inspection of the ledge.

Clay pots were stacked neatly along the nearer wall. Above them a series of murals had been painted in red and yellow ochre. The figures were stylized, with little attempt at realism in the portrayal of the fiends. Darwin was intrigued to see that many of them were set in forest backgrounds, showing boars and deer mingled with the distorted human figures. The animals, unlike the humanoids, were portrayed with full realism.

The other wall also bore markings, but they were more mysterious—a complex, intertwined network of lines and curves, drawn out in yellow ochre. At the foot of that wall lay a heap of jackets and leggins, made from crudely stitched rabbit skins. Darwin's eye would have passed by them, but he caught a faint bluish gleam from the ones furthest from the fire. He walked over to them and picked one up. It shone faintly, with the blue-green glow that they had seen moving on Cross Fell, and again near the rope bridge.

Darwin took a tuft of fur between finger and thumb, pulled it loose and slipped it into his damp coat pocket.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

As he did so, the red-man appeared from the tunnel, closely followed by a female fiend. She had a red-streaked face with similar markings, and was carrying a rough wooden box. Giving Darwin a wide berth, she set the box beside Jacob Pole. The red-man brought a clay pot from the heap by the wall, filled it with scalding water from the cauldron by the fire, and opened the wooden box. He seemed absorbed in his actions, completely oblivious to Darwin's presence.

"I see," said Darwin reflectively. "A medicine chest, no less. And what, I wonder, are the prescriptive resources available to the medical practitioner on Cross Fell?" He stooped to watch the red-man at his work.

"That one looks familiar enough. Dried bilberries—though I doubt their efficacy. And this is—what?—bog rosemary? And here is dried tormentil, and blue gentian. Sound enough." He picked up a petal and chewed on it thoughtfully. "Aye, and flowers of violet, and dried holly leaves. You have the right ideas, red-man—I've used those myself in emergency. But what the devil are these others?" He sniffed at the dried leaves. "This could be bog asphodel, and I think these may be tansy and spleenwort. But this?" He shook his head. "A fungus, surely—but surely not fly agaric!"

While he mused, the fiend was equally absorbed. He selected pinches of various dried materials from the chest and dropped them into the scalding water in the clay pot. He muttered quietly to himself as he did so, a soft stream of liquid syllables.

At last he seemed satisfied. Darwin leaned over and sniffed the infusion. He shook his head again.

"It worries me. I doubt that this is any better than prancing around Jacob to ward off evil spirits. But my judgment is worthless with those drugs. Do your best, red-man."

The other looked up at Darwin, peering from under his heavy brows. He smiled, and closed the box. The female fiend picked up the clay pot, while the red-man went to Jacob Pole and lifted him gently to a sitting position. Darwin came forward to help. Between them, they managed to get most of the hot liquid down Pole's throat.

Darwin had thought that the female was naked except for her short skirt. At close quarters, he was intrigued to see that she also wore an elaborately carved necklace. He bent forward for a closer look at it. Then his medical interests also asserted themselves, and he ran a gentle hand along her collar-bone, noting the unfamiliar curvature as it bent towards her shoulder. The woman whimpered softly and shied away from his touch.

At this, the red-man looked up from his inspection of Jacob Pole and grunted his disapproval. He gently laid Pole back on the heap of skins. Then he patted the female reassuringly on the arm, removed her necklace, and handed it to Darwin. He pointed to the red streaks on her face. She turned and went back into the tunnel, and the red-man patted his own cheek and then followed her. Darwin, mystified, was alone again with Pole. The other fiends had shown no inclination to return.

Darwin looked thoughtfully at the remains of the infusion, and listened to Pole's deep, labored breathing. At last, he settled down on a second pile of skins, a few yards from the fire, and looked closely at the necklace he had been given. He finally put it into a pocket of his coat, and sat there, deep in speculation. One theory

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

seemed to have been weakened by recent events.

When the red-streaked fiend returned, he had with him another female, slightly taller and heavier than the first. He grunted in greeting to Darwin and pointed to the single line of yellow ochre on her cheek. Before Darwin could rise, he had turned and slipped swiftly away again into the recesses of the dark tunnel.

The female went over to Pole, felt his brow, and tucked sheepskins around him. She listened to his breathing, then, apparently satisfied, she came and squatted down on the pile of skins, opposite Darwin. Like the other, she wore a brief skirt of sewn rabbit skins and a similar necklace, less heavy and with simpler carving. For the first time, Darwin had the chance for a leisured assessment of fiend anatomy, with adequate illumination. He leaned forward and looked at the curious variations on the familiar human theme.

"You have about the same cranial capacity, I'd judge," he said to her quietly. She seemed reassured by his gentle voice. "But look at these supra-orbital arches—they're heavier than human. And you have less cartilage in your nose. Hm." He leaned forward, and ran his hand softly behind and under her ear. She shivered, but did not flinch. They sat, cross-legged, opposite each other on the piled skins.

"I don't feel any mastoid process behind the ear," Darwin continued. "And this jaw and cheek is odd—see the maxilla. Aye, and I know where I've seen that jawline recently. Splendid teeth. If only I had my commonplace book with me. I'd like sketches. Well, memory must suffice."

He looked at the shoulder and rib cage and moved his index finger along them, tracing their lines. Suddenly he leaned forward and plucked something tiny from the female's left breast. He peered at it closely with every evidence of satisfaction.

"*Pulex Irritans*, if I'm any judge. Pity I don't have a magnifying glass with me. Anyway, that seems to complete the proof. You know what it shows, my dear?" He looked up at the female. She stared back impassively with soft, glowing eyes. Darwin leaned forward again.

"Now, with your leave I'd like a better look at this abdominal structure. Very heavy musculature here—see how well-developed the *rectus abdominis* is. Ah, thank you, that makes inspection a good deal easier." Darwin nodded absently as the female reached to her side and removed her brief skirt of rabbit skins. He traced the line of ribbed muscle tissue to the front of the pelvis. "Aye, and an odd pervic structure, too. See this. The pubic ramus seems flattened, just at this point." He palpated it gently.

"Here! What the devil are you doing!" Darwin suddenly sat bolt upright. The female fiend sitting before him, naked except for her ornate necklace, had reached forward to him and signalled her intentions in unmistakable terms.

"No, my dear. You mustn't do that."

Darwin stood up. The female stood up also. He backed away from her hurriedly. She smiled playfully and pursued him, despite his protests, round and round the fire.

"There you go, Erasmus. I turn my back on you for one second, and you're playing ring-a-ring-a-rosy with a succubus." Pole's voice came from behind Darwin. It sounded cracked and rusty, like an unoiled hinge, but

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

it was rational and humorous.

The female squeaked in surprise at the unexpected sound. She ran to the heap of furs, snatched up her skirt, and fled back into the dark opening in the wall of the ledge. Darwin, no less surprised, went over to the bed of furs where Pole lay.

"Jacob, I can't believe it. Only an hour ago, you were running a high fever and beginning to babble of green fields." He felt Pole's forehead. "Back down to normal, I judge. How do you feel?"

"Not bad. Damn sight better than I did when we got out of that water. And I'm hungry. I could dine on a dead Turk."

"We can do better than that. Just lie there." Darwin went across to the other fire, filled a bowl with mutton stew from the big pot, and carried it back. "Get this inside you."

Pole sniffed it suspiciously. He grunted with pleasure and began to sip at it. "Good. Needs salt, though. You seem to be on surprisingly good terms with the fiends, Erasmus. Taking their food like this, without so much as a by-your-leave. And if I hadn't been awakened by your cavortings, you'd be playing the two-backed beast this very second with that young female."

"Nonsense." Darwin looked pained. "Jacob, she simply misunderstood what I was doing. And I fear the red-man mistook the nature of my interest in the other female, also. It should have been clear to you that I was examining her anatomy."

"And she yours." Pole smiled smugly. "A natural preliminary to swiving. Well, Erasmus, that will be a rare tale for the members of the Lunar Society if we ever get back to Lichfield."

"Jacob—" Darwin cut off his protest when he saw the gleeful expression on Pole's face. "Drink your broth and then rest. We have to get you strong enough to walk, if we're ever to get out of this place. Not that we can do much on that front. I've no idea how to find our way back—we'll need the assistance of the fiends, if they will agree to give it to us."

Pole lay back and closed his eyes. "Now this really feels like a treasure hunt, Erasmus. It wouldn't be right without the hardships. For thirty years I've been fly-bitten, sun-baked, wind-scoured and snow-blind. I've eaten food that the jackals turned their noses up at. I've drunk water that smelled like old bat's-piss. And all for treasure. I tell you, we're getting close. At least there are no crocodiles here. I almost lost my arse to one, chasing emeralds on the Ganges."

He roused himself briefly, and looked around him again. "Erasmus, where are the fiends? They're the key to the treasure. They guard it."

"Maybe they do," said Darwin soothingly. "You rest now. They'll be back. It must be as big a shock to them as it was to us—more, because they had no warning that we'd be here."

Darwin paused and shook his head. There was an annoying ringing in his ears, as though they were still filled with Fell water from the underground pool.

"I'll keep watch for them, Jacob," he went on. "And if I can, I'll ask them about the treasure."

"Wake me before you do that," said Pole. He settled back and closed his eyes. Then he cracked one open again and peered at Darwin from under the lowered lid. "Remember, Erasmus—keep your hands off the fillies." He lay back with a contented smile.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Darwin bristled, then smiled himself. Jacob was on the mend. He sat down again by the fire, ears still buzzing and singing, and began to look in more detail at the contents of the medical chest.

When the fiend returned he gave Darwin a look that was half-smile and half-reproach. It was easy to guess what the females must have said to him. Darwin felt embarrassed, and he was relieved when the fiend went at once to Pole and felt his pulse. He looked pleased with himself at the result, and lifted Pole's eyelid to look at the white. The empty bowl of stew sitting by Pole's side also seemed to meet with his approval. He pointed at the pot that had contained the infusion of medicaments, and smiled triumphantly at Darwin.

"I know," said Darwin. "And I'm mightily impressed, red-man. I want to know a lot more about that treatment; if we can manage to communicate with each other. I'll be happy to trade my knowledge of medicinal botony for yours, lowland for highland. No," he added, as he saw the other's actions. "That isn't necessary for me."

The fiend had filled another pot with hot water while Darwin had been talking, and dropped into it a handful of dried fungus. He was holding it forward to Darwin. When the latter refused it, he became more insistent. He placed the bowl on the ground and tapped his chest. While Darwin watched closely, he drew back his lips from his teeth, shivered violently all over, and held cupped hands to groin and armpit to indicate swellings there. Darwin rubbed his aching eyes, and frowned. The fiend's mimicry was suggestive—but of something that seemed flatly impossible. Unless there was a danger, here on Cross Fell, of. . . .

The insight was sudden, but clear. The legends, the King of Hate, the Treasure, the departure of the Romans from Cross Fell—at once this made a coherent picture, and an alarming one. He blinked. The air around him suddenly seemed to swirl and teem with a hidden peril. He reached forward quickly and took the bowl.

"Perhaps I am wrong in my interpretation, red-man," he said. "I hope so, for my own sake. But now I must take a chance on your good intentions."

He lifted the bowl and drank, then puckered his lips with distaste. The contents were dark and bitter, strongly astringent and full of tannin. The red fiend smiled at him in satisfaction when he lowered the empty bowl.

"Now, red-man, to business," said Darwin. He picked up the medicine chest and walked with it over to the fire. He hunkered down where the light was best and gestured to the red fiend to join him. The other seemed to understand exactly what was in Darwin's mind. He opened the lid of the box, pulled out a packet wrapped in sheep-gut, and held it up for Darwin's inspection.

How should one convey the use of a drug—assuming that a use were known—without words? Darwin prepared for a difficult problem in communication. Both the symptoms and the treatment for specific diseases would have to be shown using mimicry and primitive verbal exchange. He shook off his fatigue and leaned forward eagerly to meet the challenge.

Three hours later, he looked away from the red fiend and rubbed his eyes. Progress was excellent—but

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

something was very wrong. His head was aching, the blood pounding in his temples. The buzzing and singing in his ears had worsened, and was accompanied by a blurring of vision and a feeling of nausea. The complex pattern of lines on the cave wall seemed to be moving, to have become a writhing tangle of shifting yellow tendrils.

He looked back at the fiend. The other was smiling—but what had previously seemed to be a look of friendship could equally well be read as a grin of savage triumph. Had he badly misunderstood the meaning of the infusion he had drunk earlier?

Darwin put his hands to the floor and attempted to steady himself. He struggled to rise to his feet, but it was too late. The cave was spiralling around him, the murals dipping and weaving. His chest was constricted, his stomach churning.

The last thing he saw before he lost consciousness was the red-streaked mask of the fiend, bending towards him as he slipped senseless to the floor of the cave.

SEEN THROUGH the soft but relentless drizzle, Cross Fell was a dismal place. Silver was muted to dreary grey, and sable and copper gleams were washed out in the pale afternoon light. Anna Thaxton followed Jimmy up the steep slopes, already doubting her wisdom in setting out. The Helm stood steady and forbidding, three hundred feet above them—and although she had looked closely in all directions as they climbed, she had seen no sign of Pole and Darwin. She halted.

"Jimmy, how much further? I'm tired, and we'll soon be into the Helm."

The boy turned and smiled. He pointed to a rock a couple of hundred yards away, then turned and pointed upwards. Anna frowned, then nodded.

"All right, Jimmy. I can walk that far. But are you sure you know where to find them?"

The lad nodded, then shrugged.

"Not sure, but you think so, eh? All right. Let's keep going."

Anna followed him upwards. Two minutes later, she stopped and peered at a scorched patch of heather.

"There's been a lantern set down here, Jimmy—and recently. We must be on the right track."

They were at the very brink of the Helm. Jimmy paused for a moment, as though taking accurate bearings, then moved up again into the heavy mist. Anna followed close behind him. Inside the Helm, visiblity dropped to a few yards.

Jimmy stopped again and motioned Anna to his side. He pointed to a dark opening in the side of the hill.

"In here, Jimmy? You think they may have gone in, following the fiends?"

The boy nodded and led the way confidently forward into the tunnel. After a moment of hesitation, Anna followed him. The darkness inside quickly became impenetrable. She was forced to catch hold of the shawl that she had given Jimmy to wear, and dog his heels closely. He made his way steadily through the narrow tunnels, with no sign of uncertainty or confusion. At last he paused and drew Anna alongside him. They had reached a rough wooden bridge across a deep chasm, lit faintly from below by a ghostly gleaming on the walls. Far below, the light reflected from the surface of a dark and silent pool.

Jimmy pointed silently to a group of objects near the edge. A lantern,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

shoes and a greatcoat. Anna went to them and picked up the coat.

"Colonel Pole's." She looked down at the unruffled water below. "Jimmy, do you know what happened to them?"

The boy looked uncomfortable. He went to look at the frayed end of the trailing rope that hung from the bridge, then shook his head. He set out across the bridge, and Anna again took hold of the shawl. They soon were again in total darkness. This time they seemed to grope their way along for an eternity. The path twisted and branched, moving upward and downward in the depths of the Fell.

At last they made a final turn and emerged without warning into a broad clear area, full of people and lit by flickering firelight. Anna, dazzled after long minutes in total darkness, looked about her in confusion. As her eyes adjusted to the light, she realized with horror that the figures in front of her were not men and women—they were fiends, powerfully-built and misshapen. She looked at the fires, and shivered at what she saw. Stretched out on piles of rough skins lay Erasmus Darwin and Jacob Pole, unconscious or dead. Two fiends, their faces red-daubed and hideous, crouched over Darwin's body.

Anna did not cry out. She turned, twisted herself loose of Jimmy's attempt-to restrian her, and ran blindly back along the tunnel. She went at top speed, though she had no idea where her steps might lead her, or how she might escape from the fiends. When it came, the collision of her head with the timber roof brace was so quick and unexpected that she had no awareness of the contact before she fell unconscious to the rocky floor. She was spared the sound of the footsteps that pursued her steadily along the dark tunnel.

RICHARD THAXTON surfaced from an uneasy sleep. The taste of exhaustion was still in his mouth. He sat up on the bed, looked out at the sky, and tried to orient himself. He frowned. He had asked Anna to waken him at three o'clock for another search of Cross Fell, but outside the window the twilight was already far advanced. It must be well past four, on the grey December afternoon. Could it be that Darwin and Pole had returned, and Anna had simply decided to let him sleep to a natural waking, before she told him the news?

He stood up, went to the dresser, and splashed cold water on his face from the the jug there. Rubbing his eyes, he went to the window. Outside, the weather had changed again. The light drizzle of the forenoon had been replaced by a thick fog. He could scarcely see the tops of the trees in the kitchen garden, a faint tangle of dark lines bedewed with water droplets.

The first floor of the house was cold and silent. He thought of going down to the servants' quarters, then changed his mind and went through to the study. The log fire there had been banked high by one of the maids. He picked up Anna's note from the table, and went to read it by the fireside. At the first words, his concern for Darwin and Pole was overwhelmed by fear for Anna's safety. In winter, in a dense Cumbrian fog, Cross Fell could be a deathtrap unless a man knew every inch of its sudden slopes and treacherous, shifting screes.

Thaxton put on his warmest clothing and hurried out into the gather-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ing darkness. In this weather, the safest way up to the Fell would be from the north, where the paths were wider—but the southern approach, although steeper and more treacherous, was a good deal more direct. He hesitated, then began to climb the southern slope, moving at top speed on the rough path that had been worn over the years by men and animals. On all sides, the world ended five yards from him in a wall of mist. The wind had dropped completely, and he felt like a man climbing forever in a small, silent bowl of grey fog. After ten minutes, he was forced to stop and catch his breath. He looked around. The folly of his actions was suddenly clear to him. He should now be on his way to Milburn, to organize a full-scale search party, rather than scrambling over Cross Fell, alone and unprepared. Should be turn now, and go back down? That would surely be the wiser course.

His thoughts were interrupted by a low, fluting whistle, sounding through the fog. It seemed to come from his left, and a good distance below him. The mist made distance and direction difficult to judge. He held his breath and stood motionless, listening intently. After a few seconds it came again, a breathy call that the fog swallowed up without an echo.

Leaving the path, he moved down and to the left, stumbling over the sodden tussocks of grass and clumps of heather, and peering ahead into the darkness. Twice, he almost fell, and finally he stopped again. It was no good, he could not negotiate the side of Cross Fell in the darkness and mist. Exploration would have to wait until conditions were better, despite his desperate anxiety. The only thing to do now was to return to the house. He would rest there as best he could, and be fit for another ascent, with assistance, when weather and light permitted it. Whatever had happened to Anna, it would not help her if he were to suffer injury now, up on the Fell. He began a cautious descent.

At last he saw the light in the upper bedroom of the house shining faintly through the mist below him. Down at ground level, on the left side of the house, he fancied that he could see a group of dim lights, moving in the kitchen garden. That was surprising. He halted, and peered again through the darkness. While he watched, another low whistle behind him was answered, close to the house. The lights grew dimmer. He was gripped by a sudden, unreasoning fear. Heedless of possible falls, he began to plunge full-tilt down the hillside.

The house and garden seemed quiet and normal, the grounds empty. He made his way into the kitchen garden, where he had seen the moving lights. It too seemed deserted, but along the wall of the house he could dimly see three oblong mounds. He walked over to them, and was suddenly close enough to see them clearly. He gasped. Side by side, bound firmly to rough stretchers of wood and leather, lay the bodies of Darwin, Pole and Anna, all well wrapped in sheepskins. Anna's cold forehead was heavily bandaged, with a strip torn from her linen blouse. Thaxton dropped to his knee and put his ear to her chest, full of foreboding.

Before he could hear the heartbeat, he heard Darwin's voice behind him.

"We're here, are we?" it said. "About time, too. I must have dropped off to sleep again. Now, Richard, give me a hand to undo myself, will you. I'm better off than

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Anna and Jacob, but we're all as sick as dogs. I don't seem to have the strength of a gnat, myself."

"WHAT A SIGHT. Reminds me of the field hospital after a Pathan skirmish." Jacob Pole looked round him with gloomy satisfaction. The study at Heartsease had been converted into a temporary sick-room, and Darwin, Anna Thaxton and Pole himself were all sitting in armchairs by the fire, swaddled in blankets.

Richard Thaxton stood facing them, leaning on the mantelpiece. "So what happened to Jimmy?" he said.

"I don't know," said Darwin. He had broken one of his own rules, and was drinking a mug of hot mulled wine. "He started out with us, leading the way down while the rest of them carried the stretchers. Then I fell asleep, and I don't know what happened to him. I suspect you'll find him over in Milburn, wherever he usually lives there. He did his job, getting us back here, so he's earned a rest."

"He's earned more than a rest," said Thaxton. "I don't know how he did it. I was up on the Fell myself in that fog, and you couldn't see your hand in front of your face."

"He knows the Fell from top to bottom, Jimmy does," said Anna. "He was almost raised there." She was looking pale, with a livid bruise and a long gash marring her smooth forehead. She shivered. "Richard, you've no idea what it was like, following him through the dark in that tunnel, then suddenly coming across the fiends. It was like a scene out of Hell—the smoke, and the shapes. I felt sure they had killed the Colonel and Dr. Darwin."

"They hardly needed to," said Pole wryly. "We came damned close to doing that for ourselves. Erasmus nearly drowned, and I caught the worst fever that I've had since the time that I was in Madagascar, looking for star sapphires. Never found one. I had to settle for a handful of garnets and a dose of dysentery. Story of my life, that. Good thing that Erasmus could give me the medicine, up on the Fell."

"And that was no thanks to me," said Darwin. "The fiends saved you, not me. They seem to have their own substitute for cinchona. I'll have to try that when we get back home."

"Aye," said Pole. "And we'll have to stop calling them fiends. Though they aren't human, and look a bit on the fiendish side—if appearances bother you. Anyway, they did right by me."

Richard Thaxton dropped another log on the fire, and pushed a second tray of meat pasties and mince pies closer to Darwin. "But at least there *are* fiends on Cross Fell," he remarked. "Anna was right and I was wrong. It was a hard way to prove it, though, with the three of you all sick. What I find hardest to believe is that they've been there in the mines for fifteen hundred years or more, and we've not known it. Think, our history means nothing to them. The Norman Conquest, the Spanish Armada—they mean no more to them than last year's rebellion in the American Colonies. It all passed them by."

Darwin swallowed a mouthful of pie, and shook his head. "You're both wrong."

"Wrong? About what?" asked Thaxton.

"Jacob is wrong when he says they are not human, and you are wrong when you say they've been up in the mines for fifteen hundred years."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

There was an immediate outcry from the other three.

"Of course they're not human," said Pole.

Darwin sighed, and regretfully put down the rest of his pie, back on the dish. "All right, if you want evidence, I suppose I'll have to give it to you. First, and in my opinion the weakest proof, consider their anatomy. It's different from ours, but only in detail—in small ways. There are many fewer differences between us and the fiends than there are between us and, say, a monkey or a great ape. More like the difference between us and a Moor, or a Chinee.

"That's the first point. The second one is more subtle. The flea."

"You'd better have some more proofs, more substantial than that, Erasmus," said Pole. "You can't build a very big case around a flea."

"You can, if you are a doctor. I found a flea on one of the young females—you saw her yourself, Jacob."

"If she's the one you were hoping to roger, Erasmus, I certainly did. But I didn't see any flea. I didn't have the privilege of getting as close as you apparently did."

"All the same, although you didn't see it, I found a flea on her—our old friend, *pulex irritans*, if I'm a reliable judge. Now, you scholars of diabolism and the world of demons. When did you ever hear of any demon that had fleas—and the same sort of fleas that plague us?"

The other three looked at each other, while Darwin took advantage of the brief silence to poke around one of his back teeth for a piece of gristle that had lodged there.

"All right," said Anna at last. "A fiend had a flea. It's still poor evidence that fiends are *human*. Dogs have fleas, too. Are you suggesting *they* should be called human, too? There's more to humanity than fleas."

"There is," agreed Darwin. "In fact, there's one final test for humanity, the only one I know that never fails."

The room was silent for a moment. "You mean, possession of an immortal soul?" asked Richard Thaxton at last, in a hushed voice.

Jacob Pole winced, and looked at Darwin in alarm.

"I won't get off on the issue of religious beliefs," said Darwin calmly. "The proof that I have in mind is much more tangible, and much more easily tested. It is this: a being is human if and only if it can mate with a known human, and produce offspring. Now, having seen the fiends isn't it obvious to you, Jacob, and to you, Anna, that Jimmy was sired by one of the fiends? One of them impregnated Daft Molly Metcalf, up on the Fell."

Anna Thaxton and Jacob Pole looked at each other. Jacob nodded, and Anna bit her lip. "He's quite right, Richard," she said. "Now I think about it, Jimmy looks just like a cross of a human with a fiend. Not only that, he knows his way perfectly through all the tunnels, and seems quite comfortable there."

"So, my first point is made," said Darwin. "The fiends are basically human, though they are a variation on our usual human form—more different, perhaps, than a Chinaman, but not much more so."

"But how could they exist?" asked Thaxton. "Unless they were created as one of the original races of man?"

"I don't know if there really were any 'original races of man'. To my mind, all animal forms develop and change, as their needs change. There

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

is a continuous succession of small changes, produced I know not how—perhaps by the changes to their environment. The beasts we finally see are the result of this long succession—and that includes Man."

Darwin sat back again, and picked up his pie for a second attack. Pole, who had heard much the same thing several times before, seemed unmoved, but Anna and Richard were clearly uncomfortable with Darwin's statements.

"You realize," said Thaxton cautiously, "that your statements are at variance with all the teachings of the Church—and with the words of the Bible?"

"I do," said Darwin indistinctly, through a mouth crammed full of pie. He held out his mug for a refill of the spiced wine.

"But what of your other assertion, Erasmus?" said Pole. "If the fiends were not on Cross Fell for the past fifteen hundred years, then where the devil were they? And what were they doing?"

Darwin sighed. He was torn between his love of food and his fondness for exposition. "You didn't listen to me properly, Jacob. I never said they weren't about Cross Fell. I said they weren't living in the mine tunnels for fifteen hundred years."

"Then where were they?" asked Anna.

"Why, living on the surface—mainly, I suspect, in the woods. Their murals showed many forest scenes. Perhaps they were in Milburn Forest, south-east of Cross Fell. Think, now, there have been legends of wood-folk in England as long as history has records. Puck, Robin Goodfellow, the dryads—the stories have many forms, and they are very widespread."

"But if they lived in the woods," said Anna. "Why would they move to the mine tunnels? And when did they do it?"

"When? I don't know exactly," said Darwin. "But I would imagine that it was when we began to clear the forests of England, just a few hundred years ago. We began to destory their homes."

"Wouldn't they have resisted, if that were true?" asked Pole.

"If they were really fiends, they might—or if they were like us. But I believe that they are a very peaceful people. You saw how gentle they were with us, how they cared for us when we were sick—even though we must have frightened them at least as much as they disturbed us. *We* were the aggressors, we drove them to live in the disused mines."

"Surely they do not propose to live there forever?" asked Anna. "Should they not be helped, and brought forth to live normally?"

Darwin shook his head. "Beware the missionary spirit, my dear. They want to be allowed to live their own lives. In any case, I do not believe they would survive if they tried to mingle with us. They are already a losing race, dwindling in numbers."

"How do you know?" asked Pole.

Darwin shrugged. "Partly guesswork, I must admit. But if they could not compete with us before, they will inevitably lose again in the battle for living-space. I told you on the Fell, Jacob, in all of Nature the weaker dwindle in number, and the strong flourish. There is some kind of selection of the strongest, that goes on all the time."

"But that cannot be so," said Thaxton. "There has not been enough time since the world began, for the process you describe to significantly alter the balance of the natural proportions of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

animals. According to Bishop Ussher, this world began only four thousand and four years before the birth of Our Lord."

Darwin sighed. "Aye, I'm familiar with the bishop's theory. But if he'd ever lifted his head for a moment, and looked at Nature, he'd have realized that he was talking through his episcopal hat. Why, man, you have only to go and look at the waterfall at High Force, not thirty miles from here, and you will realize that it must have taken tens of thousands of years, at the very least, to carve its course through the rock. The earth we live on is old—despite the good bishop's pronouncement."

Anna struggled to her feet and went over to look out of the window. It was still foggy and bleak, and the Fell was barely visible through the mist. "So they are humans, out there," she said. "I hope, then, that they have some happiness in life, living in the cold and the dark."

"I think they do," said Darwin. "They were dancing when first we saw them, and they did not appear unhappy. And they do come out, at night, when the Fell is shrouded in mist—to steal a few sheep of yours, I'm afraid. They always return before first light—they fear the aggressive instincts of the rest of us, in the world outside."

"What should we do about them?" asked Anna.

"Leave them alone, to live their own lives," replied Darwin. "I already made that promise to the red fiend, when we began to exchange medical information. He wanted an assurance from us that we would not trouble them, and I gave it. In return, he gave me a treasure-house of botanical facts about the plants that grow on the high fells—if I can but remember it here, until I have opportunity to write it down." He tapped his head.

Anna returned from the window. She sat down again and sighed. "They deserve their peace," she said. "From now on, if there are lights and cries on the Fell at night, I will have the sense to ignore them. If they want peace, they will have it."

"So, Erasmus, I've been away again chasing another false scent. Damn it, I wish that Thomas of Appleby were alive and here, so I could choke him. All that nonsense about the Treasure of Odirex—and we found nothing."

Pole and Darwin were sitting in the coach, warmly wrapped against the cold. Outside, a light snow was falling as they wound their way slowly down the Tees valley, heading east for the coastal plains that would take them south again to Lichfield. It was three days before Christmas, and Anna Thaxton had packed them an enormous hamper of food and drink to sustain them on their journey. Darwin had opened it, and was happily exploring the contents.

"I could have told you from the beginning," he said, "that the treasure would have to be something special to please Odirex. Ask yourself, what sort of treasure would please the King of Hate? Why was he *called* the King of Hate?"

"Damned if I know. All I care about is that there was nothing there. If there ever was a treasure, it must have been rifled years ago."

Darwin paused, a chicken in one hand and a Christmas pudding in the other. He looked from one to the other, unable to make up his mind.

"You're wrong, Jacob," he said. "The treasure was there. You saw it for yourself—and I had even closer

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

contact with it. Don't you see, *the fiends themselves are the Treasure of Odirex.* Or rather, it is what they bear with them that is the Treasure."

"Bear with them? Sheepskins?"

"Not something you could see, Jacob. *Disease.* The fiends are carriers of plague. That's what Odirex discovered, when he discovered them. Don't ask me how he escaped the effects himself. That's what he used to drive away the Romans. If you look back in history, you'll find there was a big outbreak of plague in Europe, back about the year four hundred and thirty—soon after the Romans left Britain. People have assumed that it was bubonic plague, just like in the Black Death in the fourteenth century, or the Great Plague here a hundred years ago. Now, I am sure that it was not the same."

"Wait a minute, Erasmus. If the fiends carry plague, why aren't all the folk near Cross Fell dead?"

"Because we have been building up immunity, by exposure, for many hundreds of years. It is the process of selection again. People who can resist the plague can survive, the others die. I was struck down myself, but thanks to our improved natural resistance, and thanks also to the potion that the red fiend made me drink, all I had was a very bad day. If I'd been exposed for the first time, as the Romans were, I'd be dead by now."

"And why do you assert that it was not bubonic plague? Would you not be immune to that?"

"I don't know. But I became sick only a few *hours* after first exposure to the fiends—that is much too quick for bubonic plague."

"Aye," said Pole. "It is, and I knew that for myself if I thought about it. So Odirex used his 'treasure' against the Romans. Can you imagine the effect on them?"

"You didn't see me," said Darwin. "And I only had the merest touch of the disease. Odirex could appear with the fiends, contaminate the Roman equipment—touching it might be enough, unless personal contact were necessary. That wouldn't be too difficult to arrange, either, Then, within twelve hours, the agony and deaths would begin. Do you wonder that they called him *Odii Rex,* the King of Hate? Or that they so feared his treasure that they fled this part of the country completely? But by then it was too late. They took the disease with them, back into Europe."

Pole looked out at the snow, now beginning to settle on the side of the road. He shivered. "So the fiends really are fiends, after all. They may not intend to do it, but they have killed, just as much as if they were straight from Hell."

"They have indeed," said Darwin. "More surely than sword or musket, more secretly than noose or poison. And all by accident, as far as they are concerned. They must have developed their own immunity many thousands of years ago, perhaps soon after they branched off from our kind of humanity."

Jacob Pole reached into the hamper and pulled out a bottle of claret. "I'd better start work on the food and drink, too, Erasmus," he said morosely. "Otherwise you'll demolish the lot. Don't bother to pass me food. The wine will do nicely. I've had another disappointment, and I want to wash it down. Damn it, I wish that once in my lifetime—just once—I could find a treasure that didn't turn to vapor under my shovel."

He opened the bottle, settled back into the corner of the coach seat, and closed his eyes. Darwin looked at him

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

unhappily.. Jacob had saved his life in the mine, without a doubt. In return, all that Pole had received was a bitter let-down.

Darwin hunched down in his seat, and thought of all that he had omitted to say, to Jacob and to the Thaxtons. In his pocket, the necklace from the female fiend seemed to burn, red-hot, like the bright red gold from which it was made. Somewhere in their explorations of the tunnels under Cross Fell, the fiends had discovered the gold mine that had so long eluded the other searchers. And it was plentiful enough, so that any fiend was free to wear as much of the heavy gold as he chose.

Darwin looked across at his friend. Jacob Pole was a sick man, they both knew it. He had perhaps two or three more years, before the accumulated ailments from a lifetime of exploration came to take him. Now it was in Darwin's power to satisfy a life's ambition, and reveal to Jacob a true treasure trove, up there on Cross Fell. But Darwin also remembered the look in the red fiend's eyes, when he had asked for peace for his people as the price for his medical secrets. More disturbance would break that promise.

Outside the coach, the snow was falling heavier on the Tees valley. Without doubt, it would be a white Christmas. Darwin looked out at the tranquil scene, but his mind was elsewhere and he felt no peace, Jacob Pole, and the red fiend. Very soon, he knew that he would have to make a difficult decision.

AUTHOR'S EXEGESIS: All works of fiction contain at least a few facts. Since Erasmus Darwin was a real person—and a fascinating one—it seems like a good idea to tell the reader what is true, and what was made up to help the story.

Darwin, the grandfather of Charles Darwin, was born in 1731 and died in 1802. At the time this story takes place, he was forty-six years old and already on his way to becoming the most celebrated physician in Europe. Although Charles Darwin, as the most famous proponent of the theory of evolution, is today more famous than Erasmus, the latter is in many ways a much more interesting character. He was so accomplished, in so many fields, that it was difficult to do justice to him without making the reader think I was exaggerating. He was one of the most famous poets of his day, and two of his long poems, 'The Botanic Garden' and 'The Temple of Nature', were best-sellers. He was a prolific inventor, with modern ideas in engineering. Many of his inventions were developed further by others, who found them sufficient to lead to fame and fortune. He founded the Lunar Society while living at Lichfield, and the list of its members reads like a catalog of the most influential literary and technological figures of the time: James Watt, Josiah Wedgewood, Matthew Boulton, Joseph Priestley, Samuel Galton, Thomas Day, John Baskerville, William Murdock, and of course Darwin himself. All these men enjoyed great fame in their day, and helped to launch the Industrial Revolution in England.

That's enough on Darwin himself. It is easy to write enough about him to make a book of its own, and that has been done several times. I recommend Desmond King-Hele's biography, *Erasmus Darwin*, as the best overview of Darwin's extraordinary life. Perhaps I should mention just a couple more things. Darwin was very

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

fat, he did stammer, and he lost his front teeth when he was young. He developed a theory of evolution, and in many people's opinion (including mine) he deserves to be regarded as the man who steered Charles Darwin to the theory that eventually appeared in *The Origin Of Species*.

In 1777, Darwin attended one of his patients, Milly Pole, the three-year old daughter of Colonel and Elizabeth Pole. Later, he saved Elizabeth Pole from a raging fever. When Colonel Pole died, in November, 1780, Darwin courted and married Elizabeth.

I took considerable liberties in describing the relationship between Pole and Darwin. So far as I know, they were not particular friends, and in fact Pole did not care for Darwin's interest in his wife—which had begun well before Pole's death. Nor, to my knowledge, was Colonel Pole an inveterate treasure hunter (but he *might* have been, so I feel no shame).

Cross Fell is real. It is the highest point of the Pennines, the range of hills that run from the English Midlands to the Scottish border. At one time, Cross Fell *was* called Fiends Fell, and according to legend St. Augustine drove the fiends away with a cross, and it was then re-named Cross Fell. Lead mines abound on and near Cross Fell, and have since Roman times.

The Helm is real. It is a bank of cloud that sits on or just above the summit of Cross Fell when the 'helm wind' is blowing. As a natural but puzzling meteorological phenomenon, the Helm was attracted a good deal of scientific attention. The reasons for the existence and persistence of the Helm are discussed in Manley's book, *Climate and the British Scene* (1952).

As for the botany, the medications used by Darwin to treat Elizabeth Pole are pretty much those available to the practitioner of eighteenth-century medicine. The plants used by the red fiend are consistent with the botany of the high fells, but so far as I know the medical value of most of them is not established.

Two other small points. Although the Thaxtons are fiction, the description of Anna fits quite well that of Anna Seward, a good friend of Darwin. Also, Dr. Warren, who treated Anna Thaxton, was a celebrated London physician who did in fact die of consumption.

Let me close by quoting Coleridge, who visited Darwin at Derby in 1796. "Derby is full of curiosities, the cotton, the silk mills, Wright, the painter, and Dr. Darwin, the everything, except the Christian. Dr. Darwin possesses, perhaps, a greater range of knowledge than any other man in Europe, and is the most inventive of philosophical men. He thinks in a new train on all subjects except religion."

—CHARLES SHEFFIELD

ON SALE NOW IN MAY AMAZING

SIGHT OF PROTEUS by **CHARLES SHEFFIELD, ALL THINGS TO ALL. . .** by **MACK REYNOLDS, SAINT FRANCIS NIGHT** by **GORDON EKLUND, IN THE ARCADE** by **LISA TUTTLE, CHARIOTEER** by **STEVE MILLER, YOU'VE COME A LONG WAY, BABY** by **VOL HALDEMAN.** and many new features.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Still worrying fresh flesh from the bones of an old theme, Malzberg presents us with—

PROWL

BARRY N. MALZBERG

I

WHEN THE MOON shines in full through the curtains I have spread I leave my bed and perch by it on hands and knees waiting for The Change. The change takes me within only a few moments and I am no longer on hands and knees, I am a sleek-four-footed thing that moves freely and quietly to the door which I have already left half-opened. I push the door aside with my snout and move out quickly into the hall, two bounds in the hall past mummer and daddy's room and then I am at the kitchen screens also left half-open by me an hour ago while awaiting The Change. I push past the screen and move quickly in the darkness, through the familiar weeds which now to my sensitive nose have a full, rich stink and out beyond the gate toward the road on which this afternoon as a small boy I rode my bicycle delivering newspapers. The streets are deserted as they would be in this little town at midnight on a Thursday. Not even the headlights of cars break the darkness.

I move swiftly now, gathering speed. I look for something to kill.

II

I AM a werewolf of course. The first time that The Change came upon me, more than a year ago, I was terribly frightened and clung to my room, terrified of being a doglike thing, terrified of the need of the thing that I had become for blood. I wanted to taste blood in my mouth, feel something crushing and pulped within and I cried because I did not know what was happening my cries, little whimpers which only I heard. After many hours, toward dawn, I became a small boy again and this was a great relief to me because at that time, at the beginning, I did not know that The Change was only from midnight until dawn and that wherever I was I would return to my original shape.

I was frightened but not so much so that I would tell mummer and daddy because I knew that they would not believe me and in the morning it was not impossible to believe that it had all been a dream. The next time The Change occurred, a month later, I was not nearly so scared, knowing after the very first moments what was happening to me. That time the need for blood was still very great but also I could control it because I knew then, I promised myself, that if I went through The Change one more time I would somehow satisfy it.

Suspecting that I was a werewolf since I have seen programs on television about such things I went to the library the next day and looked up all the materials I could find. They were very interesting and told me everything I needed to know. They also told me that there was no need to be

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

frightened because other people were more frightened of *me*.

The next time it happened at the next full moon I knew exactly what to do and was prepared.

III

WHISKING DOWN the broad flat road that is at our corner and which leads to downtown I see a rabbit scuttle from the bushes and run toward me in panic. For an instant we seem about to collide and my jaws are already beginning to work, I can already taste the rabbit but at the last moment it is I who swing aside and allow the rabbit to run clear and behind me. I have let him go deliberately. There is some regret in this but I press on without pain.

I have had rabbits before. The last two times I have had rabbits.

Now I need something stronger..

IV

THE ONLY THING that bothered me from all the books I read on werewolves in the library and the drawings of them that I studied was the fact that werewolves appear to be inherited. That is they are the sons or daughters of someone who is already a werewolf. It is a characteristic which shows up always in the next generation if it will show up at all.

Am I to have a son who is a werewolf?

Is it mummer or is it daddy from whom I came? Is one of them on the streets with me at this time?

I do not know. I do not wish to know. This is always why when The Change comes upon me I run past their room.

I do not wish to see whose space is empty.

V

AT MAIN I see a man, the first human who I will ever have. I know why I let the rabbit go; I want stronger meat. The man is old. He is not walking in a straight line on the sidewalk. His arms are waving and he is singing although I cannot understand any of the words.

Quietly I come in upon the building line and begin to stalk him. I let my true instincts take over. Without ever having had to study it I am, somehow, a very good wolf.

VI

THERE ARE STORIES of how werewolves are killed with a silver bullet; how religious symbols can also cause them great harm. These do not bother me because there are no silver bullets today and in spite of all the stories on television people do not really believe in werewolves. They watch for entertainment but do not feel that there are such things. No, I am not afraid of silver bullets or religious symbols or even of mummer and daddy because one of them must be a werewolf already.

The only thing that bothers me is that with the rabbits I really liked to kill and now I fear that it will be the same with a man.

VII

FROM A distance of ten feet in the shadows of the buildings I come upon the singing man. He still does not see me. He is too involved in trying to walk in what is not his straight way and in singing his song. His song is about roamings and gloamings. The moon is thick and high above but a little wisp of cloud like blood comes over it dampening the light. Just in that moment I close all of the distance and come up behind him.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

I prepare to growl but before I do this he sees me. He turns and looks down upon me. His eyes are very round and wide in his face and the same kind of film that I saw on the moon passes across them. He kicks out a foot.

"Get away," he says. "Get away you lousy dog." His breath is uneven. His kick misses me. I do not even have to dodge. The motion of his leg carried him off balance and he is on the ground. I come up against him with my snout. I make noises deep in my throat.

"No," he says, "get away!" Then his face changes as he sees me. The film is all through his eyes now.

"Oh, no," he says. "Oh no."

He throws his head back, stiffens. I see the clear blank line of his throat.

VIII

As I AM prepared to bring myself against him there are sounds behind and before I can prepare myself something has hit me a sharp blow on the rear and moved me away. I roll on the ground, come up quickly on my paws and see that a large grey form, much like, but much bigger than my own, is standing over the man. It switches its tail and screams deep inside itself. The man also screams in a lower voice. The grey thing bends toward the man.

In that moment I think I understand everything.

IX

Nevertheless I close again upon the man. I cannot for reasons which are hard to explain be driven away. I must show that the man is my game and I have captured him fairly. This may cause a battle and the battle may cost me my life but there is no choice. I have no choice. The grey thing, sensing something, turns upon me and for a long time I gaze into the bleak eyes of another werewolf. I have seen those eyes somewhere else.

X

And I AM PREPARED to battle for the meat regardless until from the darkness comes yet another form growling and whimpering to hurl itself at me. The two pound me into the concrete of the avenue and soon I fail to hear all sound.

—Barry N. Malzberg

ON SALE in AUGUST AMAZING (May 27th)

THE WINNING OF GLORIA GRANDONWHEELS by **ROBERT F. YOUNG, COLD THE STARS ARE, COLD THE EARTH** by **RICHARD C. MEREDITH, TWEEN** by **J.F. BONE, CATALYST** by **CHARLES V. DE VET, EXIGENCY & MARTIN HEIDEGGER** by **JAMES SALLIS, MURDER IN TRIPLICATE** by **CHARLES SHEFFIELD, LAST ROCKET FROM NEWARK** by **JACK C. HALDEMAN II** and many more stories and features.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Grania Davis' stories (the last two of which appeared here: "It's Hard to Get into College, Nowadays," February, 1976; "New-Way-Groovers Stew," August, 1976) are always highlighted by the personal details she furnishes her characters. Take, for example—

DAVID's FRIEND, THE HOLE

GRANIA DAVIS

ILLUSTRATED by TONY GLEESON

It was the first day of school, and really hot. David Friedman's mother had given him his lightest, blue-checked shirt, and his thinnest pants to wear. But by the time he came trudging home from the bus-stop, there were dirty riverlets of sweat running down his flushed, reddish-brown face.

David's mother, Anne Friedman was hot, too. It was *her* first day of school, also, and she was taking nearly a full semester load. The problem was, she couldn't always get the classes she wanted and had to take a lot of boring stuff. The school was terribly crowded, and she had promised her folks that she would only take classes when David was in school, so he wouldn't feel neglected. That restricted her opportunities, to say the least.

The reason Anne, at age 28, had to make (and keep) promises to her folks, was that they were supporting her and sending her through collage.

Said Anne's mother (with a regularity that would make a laxitive salesman beam), "After all, she *is* our only child. What do you want her to do, scrub floors or (God forbid) go on welfare? Besides (with a philosophical sigh) every human being is entitled to, at least, one mistake and should be given a second chance."

David, age nine, was Anne's one (visible) mistake. And with his smooth, brown skin and his tightly curled dark hair, he was a very visible mistake, indeed.

His conception, back in the mid-sixties, had been the result of a prolonged celebration, after a series of rather scary civil-rights marches in the South. Integration fever was at its peak, and found a ready welcome in the (hitherto untouched) womb of young, idealistic Anne Friedman. But just as the two races finally discovered that living together, happily-ever-after was easier said then done, so did Anne and her dark lover, David's father.

Before too long, she was back in the comfortable family living-room with a healthy tan and a protruding

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

belly. Yes, it was too late for an abortion. No, she did *not* intend to give up the baby. And yes, the baby would certainly be (as it was then called) a Negro.

The elder Friedmans paused, consulted, pulled themselves together, and took a great leap forward into the modern world.

"Anne," they said, "you did the right thing to come to us."

And they were as good as their word. No expressions of regret were permitted from either side. As soon as she was able, they let Anne get a small apartment in a (safe) integrated neighborhood.

"After all, she's not a child anymore," they said.

They encouraged her to resume her schooling, they paid all the bills. And they took great care never to mention skin color to David. Indeed, if they mentioned his appearance at all, it was to say how *very* much David resembled his grandfather, Dr. Friedman.

David, looking in the mirror, couldn't see any likeness, but he wasn't about to argue with his grandparents, who always had a dollar for ice-cream or comics, who let him watch the tiny, portable color TV set at the dinner table (!) when he ate at their house, and who knew how to cook without any spices at all. David *hated* spices, and sometimes his mother tried to sneak them in. Also, she didn't allow TV.

But life for David wasn't all Superman and mashed potatoes. He had plenty of troubles. For one thing, *he* was aware of his skin color, which was definitely what is now called black (though not like a black crayon, you understand, just a nice, nut brown). That meant he should be playing with the other black kids in the neighbor-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

hood, and taking their side in fights against whitey.

But the trouble was that deep inside, he *felt* white. His family was white. They didn't eat soul food or listen to soul music. He talked like a white and didn't know how to jive-ass. The word "nigger" sounded ugly, but so did the word "honky." He really couldn't be part of either neighborhood gang, and that cut his chance to make friends way, way down.

Then there was the question of sports. David *hated* sports. He was always afraid that the ball would hit him in the eye, or that he would get knocked down. Besides, he thought the whole business of winning and loosing was a drag. What differance did it make if you could run a little faster, or hit a ball a little further. Who *cared*? Of course, the other kids cared. So when David tried to sneak off the playground to console himself with a good comic, the teacher would come to get him. Then David would cry and refuse to play and the other kids would tease and call him a crybaby. That cut his chances for friends even further.

Then there was another matter, a small one really, but it bothered him. Whenever the school had an open house, or put on a play or show, David was usually one of the star performers. That was fine and he did enjoy it, except for one thing. Whenever these shows were put on, David's mother was always in *her* school and couldn't come and watch. As I said, a small matter, but it disturbed him.

So, all in all, David felt pretty lousy, this first hot day of school. During the summer, he could forget his troubles. He could go down to the big, vacant lot nearby, with a comic, and sit in the shade of the large sign that said:

FOR SALE
4500 sq ft, zoned for multiple use. Phone Reese Co. 981-3346

Or he could crawl under the tall weeds. Some were called dandy lions. Others were wild mustard. He had no idea what the others were. There he could read, or look for the little brown lizards, or dig holes, looking for treasures. He could enjoy himself, all alone, without anyone teasing him or rejecting him or pushing him around.

But now summer was over, and he *had* to see the other kids. There would only be a couple of hours a day to play in the vacant lot, and soon the days would get shorter and the winter rains and mud would come.

"Well," greeted his mother, trying to sound jovial, despite the nerve-frazzling registration lines, and the dreadful heat, "how was the first day of school?"

David made a sour face and sighed.

"What did you do today? Did you like your new teacher or make any friends?"

"The teacher was okay, I guess," grumbled David, "But Mom, they made me sit next to Stevie, and he's a bully. And they made me play kickball and I had to run away. And they said I couldn't bring any comics to class. And Jerry punched me at recess, and when I told the teacher, he said to punch him back. But Jerry is much tougher then I am. And in the bathroom, a bigger kid teased me and wouldn't let me out the door, so I was late to class. And John said he'd give me a nickel for some of my potato chips, but when I gave him the potato chips, he ate them and wouldn't give me the nickel."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Goodness," said his mother, "didn't anything good happen today?"

"I got to hold the flag when we marched," admitted David.

"Oh, that sounds like a lot of fun," she said, examining her textbooks. "Why don't you have some cool jello for your snack, then go outside and play?"

David sucked funerealy at a spoon of (lime) Jello. This year would be even worse then last. The class was full of teasers and bullies, and his new teacher didn't seem in the least sympathetic about his hatred for sports.

"I'm going out now, Mom," he said.

"Fine," she said, absently, "be sure to be back by five."

One of David's prize possessions was a Snoopy wrist-watch which his grandparents had given him for his birthday. David hop/skipped down the street to the vacant lot, and past the sign that said (as usual):

FOR SALE
4500 sq ft, zoned for multiple use. Phone Reese Co. 981-3346

He crawled under the shade of some tall weeds, perspired, and picked his nose meditativly, looking for an elusive bugger. ("Don't *pick*, use your handkerchief," said his superego, but he ignored that.)

Suddenly he heard a voice. "Damn," he thought, "I hope the other kids aren't coming to play here!"

But it didn't really sound like a child's voice. It was more like a record that is being played at too fast a speed. It was calling to him from the next clump of weeds.

"David," it chattered, "you wanna have some fun and help a pal?"

"Sure," grinned David, in spite of himself, "but who are you pretending to be?"

"I'm not *pretending* to be anyone," shrilled the voice, "I'm a genie, and" (with an embarassed cough) "I just so happen to be trapped in this hole and need to be rescued. Come over and dig, and you'll see what I mean."

David had heard of ventriloquists, and thought this might be one, so, intrigued, he crawled over to where the voice came from. "Should I dig here?" he asked.

"No, a little to the right."

"Here?"

"More to the left."

"Here?"

"Yes, that's right, now just start digging and don't stop until I tell you to."

Well, it just so happened that David was an expert digger. Indeed, he often thought of himself as a gopher or a mole (like *Wind In the Willows*). So, hoping this wasn't some mean trick, he hastily set to work and dug, and dug and dug.

Now and then, the voice would encourage him, a little louder each time. "That's right, David, keep digging, we're nearly there."

Finally he got down to where the earth was moist and cool. It really felt good to David who was moist and hot. Then, suddenly, there was a little puff of silvery steam from out of the hole, and the voice could be heard up in the air.

"Whew, that's much better! It was so stuffy in there. Thanks a lot, David. Now, for your reward. Let's see, you're too young for a princess, and they don't use gold here, anymore. Perhaps a few gallons of oil, or I've got a better idea, why don't you just sit in that hole, and it will take you wherever you want to go."

"What do you mean?"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Just what I said, poop-brain, just *sit* inside this hole, and from now on, it will take you wherever you want to go. Just name the place."

"Pretty strange," thought David, crawling into the hole, but I might as well try. "Ok, take me somewhere cool, to the Arctic!"

A thin, chill wind was blowing across the tundra. Patches of slushy snow lay steaming in the bright sunlight, while clouds of flies and mosquitoes swarmed around the lichens and sparse grasses growing in the thin earth. It was Indian summer in the Artic, too! Stern, glaciated mountains arched around the horizen, down to a narrow bay, where chunks of ice and barking seals floated.

Polar bears stood on the shore, panting and drooling and eyeing the seals. But the wind brought them the scent of David, shivering and frightened.

A couple of the bears turned and headed towards him.

"Wait a minute," he yelled, "I thought you were only joking. Take me home!"

HE WAS sitting in the hole, shivering and scared. He jumped out and quickly ran home.

"Mom, there's something really weird in the vacant lot!" he cried, panting out the whole story.

"Silly boy, the sun must've given you a fever, or you fell asleep and had a bad dream. Go take a cool bath and lie down."

But David took a *warm* bath and lay down.

The next day at school was even worse then the day before. They chose teams and there was no chance for David to sneak away. Not only was David the last to be chosen (as usual), but when the captain of the team saw that David was the only one left, he crawled under a table rather then have David on his team. And the rest of the day, the kids laughed and crawled under something whenever they saw him.

David had no desire to be on anyone's team, but it was humiliating, none the less. His mother was preoccupied with her own studies when he came in. "Oh, they were only joking," she said when he told her about it.

David went into the kitchen to gloom over his (orange) Jello. While he was eating he heard the same strange voice.

"Hey, David, I didn't mean to scare you. I won't let anything hurt you, promise! Come on and finish your Jello. I can show you the neatest things you ever saw!"

"Well," thought David, "it *is* nice to have someone apologize for a change. Maybe I will go, but this time, I'll be prepared!"

So, into his lunch-box, David put a pocket knife, a flashlight and an apple. He also took along his sweater, just in case and marched purposefully back to his hole and settled in.

"Where to?" asked the voice.

"Oh," replied David, with adaptable nonchalance, "take me to another planet. One with friendly creatures—but be sure I can breathe."

Was it Mars? The landscape looked kind of Martian, with barren, ruddy, boulder-strewn sands, and straight, algae-scummed canals. But wait, some of the rocks were moving. They weren't rocks at all, they were some kind of creature, like a snail!

And what was this coming by? It was round and pink and looked like a giant rubber ball, but it had a face

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

with bulging eyes, and ate the rock-snails as it rolled over them, then spat out the shells!

And what was that up in the air? Some kind of cloud creature, but lots of differant colors. And over in the distance, some kind of a garden. David laughed and clapped his hands and bounded across the low-gravity landscape. What was this? Roses as tall as redwood trees and daisies the size of a tear. Over in the corner was a cannon-ball plant with ripe, delicious fruit, but don't try to pick any, or it will shoot a cannon ball at you!

But now all the plants started to look kind of wilted, and the animals were gasping for breath.

"Damn," said the Genie, "I changed the air to make it safe for you, and now they're *getting sick. Better get you home."*

DAVID was back in his hole. But no tears this time. He was bursting with excitment as he raced home to tell his mother.

She had an encounter group that night, and was in a hurry to get him to his grandparents. He told her on the way over. She was glad to see him looking happy, for a change, and laughed about the strange monsters.

"You sure have a good imagination," she said, "just make sure you don't confuse pretend with reality."

David didn't argue. They were already there, and there were lots of good programs on TV and a good (spiceless) dinner.

The next day, David didn't even *care* what happened at school. It was awful, as usual, but he had other things on his mind. He raced home, ate his (cherry) jello and packed up his equipment.

"Bye Mom, I'm off to visit my friend, the hole."

His mother glanced up briefly from her books. "Have a good time, be back by five."

Down the street and past the sign that now read:

FOR SALE
4500 sq ft, zoned for multiple use. Phone Reese Co. 981-3346

Into the hole. This time it was Opposite Land:

Policemen robbing banks and being chased by child-molestors (David had often been warned about child molestors). Children punishing their parents for talking back (David liked that). Out in the woods there was a bear shooting at a hunter, and an innocent dragon being pursued by a fire-breathing maiden.

David had the time of his life, and it was only when he noticed that it was after six o'clock that he remembered to go home.

DAVID was punished for being late by having to go to bed an hour early. He spent that hour trying to figure out how to get his mother to Opposite Land.

So it went. Every day, new sights, sounds, adventures. He tried to tell the class at sharing time, but they all laughed and teased, so he shut up about it.

When he told his grandparents, they suggested maybe he should stop reading so many comics. "Go out and play with the other kids more. Learn to ride the bike we got you for your birthday."

No point in telling them, but he could still tell his mother when she wasn't too busy. She still laughed about the funny stuff and got excited over the dangerous parts. But she got

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

very upset if he insisted that it was real, not pretend.

"Act your age!" she would say, irritably. A couple of times she got really furious. Once he had been visiting comic book land:

He was equipped with super-strength and heat-vision, and he and Batman and Superman were battling some evil criminals who had super-strength and suction-voice.

With their suction-voice, they tried to kidnap him as a hostage, but he kept them off with his heat-vision, until his friends could change clothes and rescue him. Then POW, CRASH, ZONK, *there was a great battle on top of the Empire State Building, and finally the criminals were herded into a jail of super-bars.*

THE TROUBLE was that David was late again, and his jacket was torn and his lunch box dented.

"I don't care about the goddamn lunch box!" screamed his mother, "Just tell me where you *really* were!"

But when David tried to tell her about the heat-vision melting the lunch box, she got even madder and spanked him.

Then she began to get worried and consulted his teachers.

Yes, David was extremely withdrawn. Much more so then usual. No longer even tried to relate to his peer group, took no interest in his school work, poorly adjusted, seemed to be living in a fantasy world, a daze—a child psychiatrist might be the answer.

So David's grandfather arranged an appointment with a top child psychiatrist, Dr. Koff. David didn't mind visiting this friendly young New Yorker, except that it meant two whole afternoons a week away from his hole.

He told Dr. Koff all about the hole and the voices. The Doctor didn't get upset, but he didn't seem convinced, either. Dr. Koff had him give names to dolls and punching bags, then smash them up. That was kind of fun, but not as much fun as the hole. There were tests, too. Not like in school, funny ones where you made up stories about a blob of ink. Dr. Koff said there were no right or wrong answers, but David could tell that he was not pleased that David's stories were always about his hole.

After a while, David began to hear his elders using strange phrases like "childhood schizophrenia," or "innappropriate response," or "special school, top-rate, for *exceptional* children."

Then David's grandfather would say, "Don't worry, honey, we'll get the best care that money can buy."

And David's grandmother would come in with tears glinting in the corners of her (puffy) eyes, and offer him a second helping of desert.

But David wasn't too worried about any of this, because he had something special to think about: *Happy Land.* That's what David called it. The people there had their own name for it, but David couldn't pronounce it.

Such wonderful people lived in Happy Land! Beautiful to look at, with iridescent feathers, or soft, downy fur, or colorfully stripped and polka-dotted skin. Some of them had tails to swing on and pet people with. Others had webbed feet and lived in the water, while others had wings and could fly. The pets were as wonderful as the people. Cats that hummed a tune when they purred. Talking dogs, and laughing birds in the trees.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

There was no death, or war, or pollution, or bullies, or teasing, or sports (unless you wanted), or child molestors, or disease. Everyone lived in shining crystal houses, with lots of comics and TV's and large gardens that included sandwich trees, lamb-chop trees, ice-cream bushes and every other good thing to eat (no spices unless you asked for them). The people spent their time with their comics and small portable TV's and putting on plays and puppet shows, and digging for treasure, and playing quite nicely together.

They all loved David—such an interesting color, like tree bark. He acted in all their plays. They took him swimming and flying. He read comics to the talking dogs (who couldn't read) and went with groups on picnics and treasure hunts. He went there every day, and was busy and happy, and always hated to leave at five.

ONE AFTERNOON, as he came home, singing one of the songs from a Happy Land puppet show, his mother and (surprise) his grandparents, greeted him with big hugs and sad looks.

"David," his mother said, "you don't like that school you're going to, do you?"

"Oh Mom," he laughed, "you know I don't care about that anymore, now that I've got my hole."

The three adults winced.

"Well, David," said his grandfather, with a forced smile, "how would you like to try a different school, a fun one that you would enjoy?"

David shrugged indifferently. How could *any* school be more fun then Happy Land?

"Well," said his mother, "we think you should give it a try. You need a change of scenery and this school is really fun. It's out in the country, and you get to stay there over night, almost like camping, you know. But you can come home on weekends and holidays when I have more time to do things with you. They have horses to ride and only a few kids, none of whom are bullies. Some of them have even better imaginations than you" (she laughed nervously). "And the teachers are real nice. You can tell them your troubles, just like Dr. Koff, and they won't make you play sports. And they'll give you medicine so you won't feel nervous. . . . ."

"But Mom," David interrupted, with a quaver in his voice, "if I have to sleep there, I won't get to use my hole!"

"Son," said his grandfather, sternly, "you're just going to have to forget that hole. That lot has been sold and it won't be vacant much longer. It's all been decided. I'm sure you'll love your new school. We'll take you there on Saturday, so you'll have the weekend to get acquainted. So come on, now, cheer up. Grandma and I will take you out for a big hot fudge sundae."

David spooned hot fudge and made plans. It was too bad about leaving his mother and grandparents, but he could come back and visit when they got used to the idea. Today was Thursday. He should probably leave on Friday afternoon. Take tomorrow to pack his things and say goodbye to everyone, then be off.

"To the new school?" asked his superego.

"No, silly, to Happy Land! I'm going there forever and I won't come back (except for visits when they get used to the idea)."

"Well," his elders congratulated themselves, after David went to bed, "he seems to be taking the whole thing pretty well."

"Sure," reasured his grandfather,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"he's basically a healthy kid, it's all that racial tension that's been getting him down."

"I hope," worried his Grandmother, "that the sight of some of the *really* sick kids in that place, and, you know, the retarded ones, doesn't upset him."

"Don't worry about that, they keep them pretty separate. I've been up there. It's the best one in the state. He'll be his old, cheerful self in no time," replied Dr. Friedman.

Friday. The last day of school. David was so excited, he just couldn't keep it to himself. He went around telling all the kids who weren't his *worst* enemies goodbye. He told them he was going to Happy Land. He told them all about it. The teacher bit her lip and warned them not to tease. She knew what was going on.

Friday afternoon. David raced home and bolted his (orange) Jello and packed his lunch box kit. He gave his mother a special hug and told her not to worry, he'd see her again, soon. She gave him a nice hug, back.

Whistling a Happy Land cat tune, David skipped down the sidewalk to the vacant lot.

But something was the matter, something was changed. The big sign was down, and there were a bunch of men with a big, noisy bulldozer. The bulldozer was pulling up the weeds and pushing aside the rocks and flattening the land. Flattening it!

Filling up all the holes!

David raced onto the vacant lot. If only he could get to his hole before the bulldozer filled it up. There'd still be time to escape. Still be time . . . Still . . .

A big, rough hand grabbed him, "Sorry, son," said a voice out of a sunburned, hard-hatted face, "we can't let kids play here anymore. They might get hurt and then we'd be responsible."

David started to cry and wriggle. He *had* to get to his hole, the bulldozer was heading right towards it! David gave the man a sharp kick in the ankle and wrenched himself free. Sobbing, he began to race to the hole.

"Come on, David, Run!" called the Happy Land people from the hole.

"I'm coming!" cried David.

"Hurry, David, Hurry!" called the Happy Land folk.

"Watch out!" yelled the man in the bulldozer.

David reached his hole at the same moment as the bulldozer. He leapt in and gasped, "I made it."

"Hooray, David, you made it, you made it!" cheered his Happy Land friends.

"My God," gasped the man in the bulldozer, "I hit him! I couldn't help it, he ran right in front of me. Did you see?" he called anxiously to the others, "I couldn't help it. He ran right in front of me!"

They saw. They all agreed that Frank (the man in the bulldozer) couldn't help it.

"Thank God," said the owner of the lot, when he arrived to see, "I bought lots of liability insurance."

David's mother and grandparents also came and saw. They cried a lot and blamed each other. But deep down (where no one would notice) there was just the tiniest twinge of relief.

"It was a terrible tragedy, but God willed it," said the elder Friedman philosophically. "Anne is young. She can start to live a normal life again. Eventually she can marry and have others. Perhaps we can cheer her up with a summer session in Hawaii."

—Grania Davis

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Haldeman's last story for us was "The End-Of-The-World Rag" (December, 1977). He returns with a story of somewhat lighter tone—

WHAT WEIGHS 8000 POUNDS AND WEARS RED SNEAKERS?

JACK C. HALDEMAN II

FRED almost took off his nose. It was Sunday morning and he was shaving. His wife was in the front yard, screaming. He dropped the razor in the sink.

Running down the stairs with the towel still around his neck, he dabbed ineffectually at his bleeding nose with a styptic pencil. Screaming was something he had trouble handling before his first cup of coffee.

"What's the matter?" he shouted as he threw open the front door and nearly ran into the elephant.

"What's the matter is this elephant," said his wife, swinging a broom in the direction of the beast. "It's ruining the roses."

Fred sized up the situation immediately. The elephant was certainly doing the flowers no good, standing with one immense foot in the middle of their carefully sculptured garden. Another foot came down and crushed his new flagstone walkway. After he had so faithfully copied it from last month's *Better Homes and Gardens!* Fred began to get mad.

It was obvious that his wife was having no luck at all in moving the animal. She was still dressed in her flowered nightgown, swinging wildly at the elephant's huge, leathery side with the broom. What would the neighbors think?

A random swing of the elephant's trunk knocked over the bird bath, splashing water and decapitating one of the cherubs that held it up.

Fred felt a draft and realized that he was still in his underwear. A crowd of onlookers was growing. They were shouting helpful words of advice and encouragement.

"Atta boy. Now stand on your head," shouted one.

"Go to it, baby. Get the chaise lounge next," shouted another.

Fred just stood there, frozen, unable to decide on a course of action. He wiped the shaving cream from his chin and dabbed at his nose.

The elephant sunk to its knees and raised its trunk, giving a final bellow. With a mighty crash, it collapsed on top of the chaise lounge and died.

"Goodness," said Fred, quite overcome by the event.

"Terribly frightful," said his wife.

"Here comes another one," said an onlooker.

And sure enough, coming unsteadily down Elm Street was another bull elephant. He seemed very old and *very* tired. Occasionally he would stumble into cars parked along the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

side of the road, leaving a crunched fender here, a broken window there.

Much to Fred's horror, the elephant turned up his driveway. Amid great cheers from the crowd and with no small amount of destruction, the elephant thrashed around and died on the front lawn next to the other one.

"Fella," said the sheriff as he detached himself from the crowd. "You gotta clear this street. You're creating what we call a public nuisance."

Fred started to shake.

There was more shouting from down the street and Fred began to feel sick to his stomach. Without waiting for the next elephant to arrive, he called to his wife and turned his back on the littered front lawn. Those crazy animals could wait, his breakfast couldn't.

"Looks like an elephant graveyard," he muttered into his coffee.

Fred was certainly right about that. As spring eased its way into summer, more facts came to the surface. For one thing, it *was* an elephant graveyard—not just any old elephant graveyard, but *the* elephant graveyard. The place where all the elephants came to die.

The town was making money right and left off of poor Fred's problem. A huge banner over main street proclaimed the city as "The Elephant Graveyard For The Whole World". Stores sold little elephant key chains and plastic statues. Tourism thrived. A nation-wide ice cream chain was doing a brisk business selling grey "Tepid Tusk" ice cream. The city fathers were considering inviting the GOP to hold their national convention in the city.

The elephants kept piling up in Fred's front yard.

The children loved it. They would dance and run alongside the elephants as the beasts made their clumsy way to Fred's house. A circus had set up permanent residence outside town and when an unusually large number of elephants came through they supplied a steam calliope and clowns. It was a festive occasion.

Fred received his "final notice" from the Health Department ordering him to "clean up or else".

A marble elephant was hastily erected in the park across the street from the Town Hall. New stores sprang up like crab grass, jumping on the pachyderm bandwagon with names such as The Jumbo Supermarket. Giant plastic elephants with hideous grins held huge hamburgers above their heads as they slowly revolved on circus-drum pedestals alongside the street.

Things were getting out of hand for Fred.

"Got to do something about all these elephants," he said to his wife.

"The children *do* love them so," she said, by now resigned to having a lawn full of them.

"But look at all this stuff," Fred said, waving his arm towards a table piled high with official notices and court orders of various sorts. "This has got to stop."

"You've tried everything, dear."

"Just about. And the bills—"

He was cut off by a knock at the door.

"I'll bet it's another summons," he said, opening the door a crack. He peered out to find a bespectacled man peering back at him.

"Can I help you?" he asked, opening the door a little wider.

"*I* can help *you*," replied the man. "That is, if you will only open the door a little wider."

Fred cautiously opened the door

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and the man came in.

"We spoke once before, Mr. Wipes. Perhaps you remember me. Professor Devin is the name."

"Devin . . . Devin. Oh, yes. Curator of the zoo's elephant house, if I recall correctly."

"Quite correct. And you may further recall that I mentioned I would give your problem some thought."

"That was months ago."

"Thinking takes time, Mr. Wipes."

"And the results of all that thinking?"

"I have solved your problem."

"Would you like some tea?" asked Mrs. Wipes, entering the room with a silver tray.

"Yes, thank you," said the professor.

"The answer . . . ?"

"Sugar?"

"Please."

"The elephants . . ." Fred squirmed in his chair.

"One lump or two?"

"Two, thank you."

Fred gripped the arms of his chair tightly.

"Cream?"

"Just a dash, thank you."

"Professor. The elephants. Umm. Umm."

"Ah, yes, Mr. Wipes. It is really quite simple. Excellent tea, by the way," said the professor, turning towards Mrs. Wipes.

She grinned shyly.

"What can I do?" shouted Fred, a little too loudly.

The professor turned slightly and cocked one eyebrow, sipping his tea in a manner possible only to one who forever regrets never having been born British.

"Artichokes," he said simply, placing his cup on the stand next to his chair.

"Artichokes? You mean those horrible prickly things?"

"Please." He raised one hand palm forward. "You insult a great vegetable."

"How can artichokes help me?" Fred asked, convinced that he had a nut on his hands.

"Artichokes are the first link in the chain that will rid your lawn of all those dying elephants."

"How can a vegetable do that?" It was a thorny problem.

"First you plant your front lawn full of artichokes," a gleam came to the professor's eye. He licked his lips. "Then you import a large number of *mice*." He waved his arm grandly.

"Oh," said Mrs. Wipes. "The children love mice almost as much as they love the elephants."

"I don't understand," said Fred.

"I will continue. You must let thousands of field mice loose among the artichokes. Then you flood your front lawn."

"Flood? Wait a minute—"

"As you flood your lawn, the mice will have nowhere to go but on top of the artichoke plants. They will be unable to escape and, lucky animals, they can survive by eating the tender tops of the artichokes. They will remain on top of the plants and your problem will be solved. No elephant in his right mind would approach a lawn full of mice."

"That is one stupid idea," said Fred. "That's so stupid, it just might work."

"I have thought it through carefully. It cannot fail. Now, if you will excuse me, I have some hay to deliver to my charges. I *do* hope attendance at the zoo picks up after you finish with all these free shows."

Fred thanked him and showed him to the door. He immediately opened

(cont. on page 115)

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

SEND US A PLANET

DAVID R. BUNCH

The world is already overpopulated in places, but what if there was no refuge left from overcrowding? The solutions attempted might be a little drastic. . .

PEOPLE WERE ALWAYS blaming them. People seemed to like to blame them. Old ladies covered up with each other, for instance, would somehow, threshing and fighting about, struggle a face up to the top and bitterly say, "It just has to be *them*! The Space Rapers did this to us!" Not, I mean, that the Rapers had ever laid even so much as an eyeball in lust upon the old ladies, but the old ladies blamed them for the heaps. And also for the heaps of heaps. And old men bundled and sacked and tagged, if conscious, would suddenly like as not suck in their own personal asthmatic gusts and burst out in a rage, "Sure, it's the Rapers. Damned punks. In our own day, sure we liked it. But we didn't forget all decency altogether, and all control. Now, here we are, unless something happens, tagged for a dump shot to the moon . . . because there's too many. . ."

And little children would stand and sing of the Rapers. In their innocence and ignorance the kids were kidlike proud of the gleaming riders with the polished spangled helmets and their own personal space sports rockets. The kids would lisp and squeak and maintain at each other, "My pop's a Space Raper. Yeth he ith!" When merely, like as not, their old man was only some common workaday drudge, probably a power-wafer mixer in some dim power wafer factory, who had struggled home one eve and had himself an uncontrolled fine time with his drudge wife from the fin works (she should have known better) and thus the kid. But anyway, there they were, little old space-age brats in their billions claiming for some distinction, some kinship with the gleaming hell-crew of punkhead irresponsibles. And sure, they played their part in this problem, these punkheads. They didn't always give their victim time to prepare, time to take a pill, insert, put up the shield, pinch off a tube, or whichever one of the many proved ways this particular beautiful vessel of life chose to remain light-freighted.

But you can't tell me they were numerous enough to even start in, so's to speak, to cause all this terrible trouble, these gleamy handsome Space Rapers with all their irresponsibility and appeal. Not even if they had raped around the clock, could they have done it. And also, to be absolutely fair, that word "Rapers" in their title didn't exactly stand for what they were being accused of anyway. It was just a slashing hell-gone whirlaway penetrating type of word to describe what these lads were supposed to be doing for a living. They were supposed to be making a deep deep swift intrepid devil-take-the-hindermost impetuous lusty far entrance into *big* outer space. All in the interests of the advancement of man's

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

knowledge of the Great Hollow, the Out There, the Limitless Hole, of course, and also for a much more practical reason *now*! a real *need*! That they did other rakehellish things when home on leave, I won't deny. Who could? Effectively?

But many things there were to think about when you saw the heaped old ladies, the sacked and tagged old men and the big crates and freight cars of the others standing by. Or lying by. Let us be correct. No one in that group was standing. They were lying like any cargo, awaiting shipment. And the means of their cartage was there, the great ships lying fins-up far as the eye could reach, the drivers uniformed, union-carded and ready. The dread drayage awaited on one thing, and that one thing was *where* . . .

When I saw these *bad* conditions, or any part of them, for some reason I always thought of coin-operated sex. Now, I don't know why I should have done this, because coin-operated sex certainly was not the whole fault, just as the Space Rapers were not the whole fault. Nor was any other one thing in our life the whole fault. But I will argue on all the podiums of the land, on all the power-wafer boxes, on all the lecture platforms, that coin-operated sex did have more to do with causing this problem than did the Space Rapers or any other single thing in our society.

Coin-operated sex was actually the ultimate in coin-operated vending and many people had seen it as a possibility a long long time before it became fact. But when it finally arrived, and the majority of the people really saw what they had by the nose, it was just as it has been with a lot of other things: many were for it and many were against it. But for all that of its having something less than unanimous sanction, it persisted and grew until finally it has become almost the low-entertainment stump that wags our whole little dog. But I will say this. Rightly controlled, it could have been a boon. It could have been a real saver, say, for tired old wives, not-in-the-mood wives, pregnant wives, etc. When their lusty virile still-full-of-the-old-ginger-type husbands were not willing to listen to reason and sensible good talk, these wives could just have dug down in the coin purse and sent those cats down to the sex shops to have talk and good sport in some little coin-operated room with some ersatz "living doll." And what's to be jealous about? Those "dolls" would just be contraptions.

But for all its faults and the trouble, and the good too, coin-operated sex was, and is, *in*, and regular ordinary standard prostitution, infidelity, adultery, rape, homosexuality etc. were, and are, *out*. (Which statement, by the way, rightly read, constitutes just another reason why I say the Space Rapers didn't do as much of it as they are being blamed for by old processed ladies and old sacked men.) Now, the things that dwindled in the love picture didn't have anything whatever to do with the desire that I say expanded, ballooned, grew to unreasonable proportions. And the fact that this urge grew is really the heart and soul of my whole thesis that blames mainly coin-vendable sex for the acres and acres of space ships ready, the heaped old ladies processed, the sacked old men tagged and waiting and the other cargo—the intermediates, the damaged ones and the volunteers—lying in packaged state.

Not that I'm going to let the Space Rapers off entirely. Oh no! But I'm blaming them for something quite

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

other than the first-level act of raping. I'm blaming them for not raping! not effectively enough, that is, in the area of their responsibility—*space! Yes!* There are too many virgin light-year miles out there yet, too many unprobed galaxies swinging unmolested, too many little maidenheaded stars flirting and whirling free, for me to say the Space Rapers lived up to their title enough and did proud their gleamy uniforms, the spangled headgear and the high tight black space boots. Let's admit it, they have been just puttering around on the outer skin of space, pretty much *failures*. So far!

But this coin-operated thing? For that let me do a little explaining and tell why I blame it, hold it accountable above all other blamable things, for this Great Too Many. Suppose you had been making your regular runs into the love shops, had consorted with your great variety, the statuesque redheads, the little goldy-blonde ones, the fine brunettes and all the in-betweens, had experimented with ages and shapes and heights and weights, proportions and all that, until you were almost despairing of it all, what would you do? You'd probably have yourself a great revulsion against all these artificial "dolls," the sterility of the shops and all lovevendable things. Now and again. Not that you wouldn't backslide later and hustle right back to it and fit it into your regular program, as a matter of course and out of necessity, wives being what they are—usually too-oo tired.

But what I'm getting around to say is this: coin-operated love, surely the ultimate in make-believe and falsity in the human relationship, generated, after a certain amount of it, a great urge for a person to be a real person once again. To be a real person once again most of them went all the way back to beginner's status and decided to do one of the most ordinary, one of the most rudimentary, and yet one of the most true-real things in the whole of the human experience. *They decided to become parents!* And as if that in itself wasn't bad enough, to make matters worse, most of them fondly hoped that the results would be real-true copies of themselves. (*Weeooaahh!!!* the terrible terrible human ego that never never grows better. —If what we actually need less of could be said succinctly, it probably could be succinctly said that what we actually need less of is most people. And that goes for real-true copies, too.) But they did it, for better or for worse, and I say *worse*, until there they were in their billions, little old space-age brats, carbon copies of their horrible space-age parents. (That I have twelve *fine* space-age boys-and-girls myself is not a part of this story. *No!*) And the brats grew and, being so numerous, they crowded the land, what with the oldsters, through the "miracles" of medical science, great diet, part "replacement" and all that, hanging on and hanging on, and we who were not so old, only eighty or so, still wanting our shot at world conditions. So it finally became a must that we who were "not so old" should round up our fathers and mothers, other Old Ones, the maimed, the otherwise damaged and the few volunteers and package them all for the *Far Out* shipment. (At least we still hope for the Far Out shipment. But as time runs out on us it is beginning to look more and more like "garbage dump to the moon" for our poor ancestry and the others.) You can see how we were forced, really. And I say, among all

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the things responsible, the coin-operated vending of illicit love was the big loose sin really most responsible for triggering up this condition. You may not agree. You don't have to. It's just a theory.

But with the facts of the heaps of the cargo and space ships waiting you have to agree. They are there! And the terrible urgency for speed is there. And the failures—they are there. Always the failures, the Space Rapers failing. —Every day disappointing news. Equipment failure. Human failure. "Reached destination, but found only arid land." And the cover-ups like "real hope now!" "not quite," "try again," "we'll succeed," "hold that line!" "we'll soon make it. . ." And the old ladies, who would be "Mothers" again in some New Land, still lying in heaps, cursing, and the old men . . . and the others. . .

And yet, while I blame them now, I dream of a day when the Rapers will come back, fins-out and slow and graceful into our air, and with the flags up and the flares shooting and the color display on announce that they have done it, have found a place in the far Out There where the Old Ones can go, have saved them from a dump shot to the moon. Then what a day! next day. The acres and acres of space ships roaring to life, the sacked and ruined old men, who in their great fear and defiance have refused death, going; the vengeful and spiteful old ladies, heaped and longing to be "Mothers" again, going; and the others—all *all* going to that habitable place far away that the Space Rapers have found for them! And there they can all start over, calling their new diggings New-Life Hills, Start-Again Start, Morning After All, or any one of a dozen other names they might wish to apply to tell us back here, "So there, now. Go to hell!" And we here on earth who are young yet, like only eighty or so, can have ourselves some living room once again, a little elbow space to go on with our many schemes and devices, and our own fair shot at world conditions. But always threatened of course in our turn by our own space-age children—eyeing our houses, scouting our offices, coveting our beds, wanting our chairs, cluttering our space ports, raiding our sex shops, devouring our food supplies and depleting our beverages—grouping up in their billions!

—David R. Bunch

ON SALE in AUGUST AMAZING (May 27th)

THE WINNING OF GLORIA GRANDONWHEELS by **ROBERT F. YOUNG, COLD THE STARS ARE, COLD THE EARTH** by **RICHARD C. MEREDITH, TWEEN** by **J.F. BONE, CATALYST** by **CHARLES V. DE VET, EXIGENCY & MARTIN HEIDEGGER** by **JAMES SALLIS, MURDER IN TRIPLICATE** by **CHARLES SHEFFIELD, LAST ROCKET FROM NEWARK** by **JACK C. HALDEMAN II** and many more stories and features.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Journal (cont. from page 19)

rendition of *Beowulf*; no better way to convey the horror that overwhelmed me when I ran to the window in response to Erika's scream and saw him striding up from the shore toward the mansion. The whiteness of Erika's face would have told me, if her terrified scream had not already done so, that here was the one whom she feared above and beyond all others, that here was the creature responsible for the naked terror I had sometimes seen come into her eyes when she gazed across the water toward the mainland. We were able to bolt all the doors and secure all the shutters before the monster got here, but it is at best but a temporary measure. In his fury, he has already torn down the verandah, and now he is hammering on the front door with his huge, hairy fists. Soon, it will give way before him. Erika cowers on the drawing-room floor, weeping, and I am at a loss as to what to do. Clearly, this blond ogre is a suitor whom she has rejected and who wishes to do her physical harm, perhaps kill her. Equally clearly, I must protect her. But how?

The pounding on the door increases in din, and the whole house trembles. Grendel's roars of rage rattle the windowpanes. I must act without further delay.

Midnight:

ALL IS LOST—all. I write this by lantern-light in Erika's cave, lying in her arms. Each time I breathe, my shattered ribs pierce my lungs, and I am constantly spitting blood. Sporadically, from the distance, come the pain-crazed screams of the blinded Grendel as he stalks, mortally wounded, about the island, searching for his nemesis.

I am his nemesis. I, Nathaniel Worth, put out this vindictive ogre's eyes.

The idea came to me when, tiring of pounding on the door, he smashed open one of the shutters and thrust his great hand through the windowpane. The afternoon had been unseasonably cool, and I had built a fire in the hearth to ward off the chill. I had been stirring it, intending to add more wood, when Erika's scream and the shattering of glass drew my attention to the window. The poker I was using had grown so hot I could barely hold onto it; rushing to her side, I thrust its glowing end into Grendel's questing hand, and the huge fingers instinctively closed around it. The scream that burst forth from the giant's throat was compounded as much of rage as it was of pain; nevertheless, he withdrew his hand and desisted, for the moment, in his attempts to batter down the house. This provided me with the time I needed to carry out the plan that the incident had given birth to.

Directing Erika to build up the fire, I slipped out into the backyard and brought back two of the saplings I had cut and trimmed for birdhouse-poles. After sharpening their bases, I bound them together with stout wire and thrust the two pointed ends into the flames. One fiery stake had been enough for Ulysses, but my Polyphemus had two eyes.

He began pounding on the door again, more furiously than before, and I started fanning the fire, directing Erika to do likewise. The pointed ends were flaming when I carried the poles upstairs, and I inadvertently set fire to one of the hangings in the hall. I did not stop to extinguish the flames—there was no time—but

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

plunged into the front room, which formed the base of the tower and overlooked the front entrance. Unfastening the shutters, I flung them wide. Grendel's eyes, almost on a level with my own, presented a perfect target as I thrust the fiery pole-ends through the windowpane. I could not miss—nor did I.

He screamed, fell back, raising his hands to the scorched sockets where his eyes had been. As he did so, one of his mighty forearms struck the lashed-together poles, which had been wrenched from my grasp, and sent them crashing against my chest with such force that I was catapulted across the room and crashed into the wall. After that, darkness came, and when at last it dissipated I found myself down on the beach, cradled in Erika's arms. Grendel's screams were resounding through the night, and my beloved mansion, set ablaze by the very weapon with which I had sought to save it, was a flaming pyre brightening the sky.

Sobbing, Erika set me gently down and tried to launch Grendel's heavy boat. But he had drawn it so far up on the shore that even her great strength was unequal to the task. The screams crescendoed, and, desisting in her efforts, she picked me up again and made her way along the beach to the beginning of the cliffs and thence along their base to the cave. She saved as many things from the fire as she could, but she concentrated on those items which she believed I treasured most; hence, while I have my journal and the steel box in which I keep it, and pen and ink with which to write and a lantern to see by, we have no blankets to ward off the damp chill of the cave, and nothing whatsoever to eat. I have tried as best I could to persuade her to take my small boat and row to the mainland. But she refuses to do so, and I know why. She is as aware as I am that I am dying, and she is determined not to leave my side. I also know that after I am dead, she will remain here till she dies too. I know these things because of this wondrous love that exists between us—this radiant love that reduces ordinary love to the mere flickering of a candle flame, this unselfish love that has enriched both our lives; this love that is a love which can only come into being between two outcasts—two children of the night.

Later:

GRENDEL'S screams have died away, and all is still. Somehow I know that he is dead. Perhaps the near-dead have perceptions in such matters that the living are denied. As I write this, Erika's arm creeps round my shoulders and her gentle fingers caress my face. Wearily, I lay my head upon the soft slope of her breast. Are those stars I see in the cavern-sky? They wink out, one by one. The light from the lantern dims. Good night, sweet, gentle *géante*, good night . . .

ADDENDUM

THE FOREGOING JOURNAL came into my hands through a friend who happens to be a descendant of the cousin to whom Nathaniel Worth bequeathed his island, and who recently inherited the property himself. Previous generations of his family had always regarded the place as a white elephant—an attitude traceable to their attachment to the state where they live and to their disdain for the other forty-nine—and, aside from posting the land, they ignored it utterly. My friend, however, recognized

DIGITIZED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

at once the island's potential as a beach resort and journeyed posthaste to the village of W——, rented a small boat and set forth to explore his property.

He was intrigued by the ruins of Nathaniel Worth's dwelling, although they consist of but little more than a rubbish-choked cellar; but it wasn't until he came upon the cave in the cliffs and found and read the journal that his curiosity really became aroused. Knowing my interest in gigantism, he brought his find to me at once, along with three items that he had dug out of the files of the village of W——'s only newspaper. He maintains that, while these three items are the only ones that could conceivably tie in with the journal, none of them makes sense; and he also maintains that the two skeletons that he found in the cave beside the journal make even less sense.

I submit that both the items and the skeletons make excellent sense.

Let us go back to the journal for a moment. In the entry dated January 6th, 1878, Worth asks the following rhetorical questions: "Is not the reality of anything dependent upon the presence of its opposite? Could there be coldness if there were no warmth? We say a young lady has light hair, but could she have light hair if there were no darkness to compare it to? We call a large hill a mountain, but would the distinction exist if all hills were large? And giants—are not giants subject to relativity too? If all men had been giants since the beginning of time, would there have been such a word in any of the languages?"

A very neat bit of reasoning, when you consider that the reasoner was entering into as classical an act of self-deception as any man has ever pulled on himself. At that particular moment, in fact, he was half aware of what he really was and half aware of what he really wasn't.

What *was* he then, aside from the combination snob and simpering sentimentalist his lucubrations reveal him to be?

Consider his choice of an island, the dominant tree of which is the hawthorn.

Consider the Scandinavian characteristics of Erika.

Consider his "mislaying" of his Morse magazine rifle—a rifle that, in common with all rifles, could be miniaturized only to a degree in keeping with the diameter of its bore.

Consider the fact that the rubbish-choked cellar that my friend examined was not a large one.

Consider that when a man creates a reality that pleases him and lets that reality get the upper hand, he will make every single object, animate or inanimate, that subsequently enters into that reality *conform to that reality*.

Now, consider the three news items. The first is dated April 22nd, 1878, and describes the disappearance of a Swedish immigrant girl from the house of her husband, one Lars Nilsson, whom she had recently journeyed to America to marry. The second is dated June 14th, 1878, and describes the disappearance of Lars Nilsson from the village and its environs. The third is dated November 3rd, 1903, and describes the discovery of a man's skeleton upon the nearby island of M——.

I think that we can safely assume that the skeleton mentioned in the final item was that of Lars Nilsson, and I think that we can also safely assume that one of the two skeletons that my friend found in the cave is that of Nilsson's Swedish immigrant

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

bride, who undoubtedly was guilty of the crime of being mentally retarded, who probably, before fleeing across the ice to the island, had never had a kind word spoken to her in all her life, and who probably had been severely beaten by her husband time and time again.

We now have one skeleton left—a diminutive one that my friend believes to be that of the woman's child. However, there is no evidence that would indicate either that she had a child, or was with child at the time of her disappearance. All of which leads up to the key question: *Whose skeleton is it?*

Well, it could hardly be that of a six-foot, two-inch man, which *seemingly* rules out its being Nathaniel Worth's.

But it could, conceivably, be that of a two-foot, six-inch dwarf.

—ROBERT F. YOUNG

What Weighs 8000 pounds (cont. from page 107)

the yellow pages and called one of the listings under "Artichokes, Retail Sales". They were delivered the next morning and the mice arrived as he finished planting the last one.

As he flooded his front yard with his garden hose, Fred was amazed to see all the little mice line up like soldiers on top of the artichokes. It was working. He settled down on the front porch to wait for the first elephant.

He didn't have to wait long. A large old elephant, covered with scars, made the turn towards his driveway and stopped short. His eyes rolled wildly and he immediately seemed to forget all about dying. He raised his trunk and bellowed in fright. Turning around, he lumbered away.

And then there were no more elephants.

Weeks went by and the only arrivals were Health Department notices about the mice and the flooded condition of his front yard in which mosquitoes were breeding. Occasionally an angry merchant from town would send him a nasty letter.

Things were working out just swell for Fred and his wife. They grew to love the little mice and Fred even developed a grudging admiration for the lowly artichoke.

One fine day Fred was standing on his front proch in his hip boots watering the lawn when a very unusual visitor came up to his driveway.

The man was incredibly old. He was wearing an old World War One uniform and his white hair flowed gently from underneath his battered pie-tin helmet. His beard almost reached his polished belt buckle. He carried an old rifle at his side and stood proudly at attention. His eyes twinkled.

Fred was about to say something to the old man when a clamor from down the street drew his attention away.

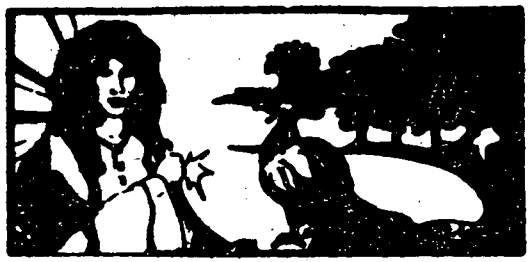
All up and down Elm Street people were advancing on his house. Many came on crutches, many were in wheelchairs. They were all old. They were all soldiers.

The first old soldier gave a wink, saluted, and faded away.

—JACK C. HALDEMAN II

ARCHIVED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

fantasy books



Reviewed by Fritz Leiber

JUST ABOUT ten years ago Harry Harrison sent me a couple of new books and asked me to do a review section for this magazine. I agreed, partly because I was ambitious to do a book on imaginative literature (provisionally titled *The Fantasy Novel*) and hoped to learn more of the art of analyzing and reviewing books (of course the two aren't the same thing) by doing some of the same. For the first two numbers Harry picked the books, but he was rather shortly replaced as editor and I was thereafter completely on my own, free to review the books I chose in whatever manner I wanted and with no editorial pressures whatsoever—and I certainly took full advantage of this freedom, making no attempt to be exhaustive or even current, frequently reviewing books several years after their appearance. I produced sections pretty regularly the first three years, sporadically the next three (when my life was in something of a mess), then regularly again the past four. Now seems a good point to pause and take stock of what, if anything, I've accomplished.

I've been enabled to write something in a moderately extended way about writers I particularly like: Robert Heinlein, E.R. Eddison, Robert E. Howard, Lovecraft and the Lovecraftians, James Blish, and Robert Bloch. If I should ever write *The Fantasy Novel*, my choices for these might be *Double Star, The Worm Ouroboros, The People of the Black Circle, The Shadow Out of Time, Dr. Mirabilis*, and *Psycho*—the last two choices in order to raise the question of what we mean by fantasy and also to get in favorite books. (Incidentally, I've just read an excellent collection of Bloch's new stories, all written within the past seven years: COLD CHILLS, Doubleday, 1977, $5.95. Unlike some successful TV and film writers Bloch keeps on turning out just plain stories; the fantasy muse is a merciless one. Here we have such memorables as the wistful "The Movie People," the savage "The Animal Fair," the psychoanalytic "See How They Run," and "The Model" with its macho-destroying space monster. Included are fascinating autobiographic sections telling how each story came to be written.)

There are also, of course, the books and authors I haven't yet found the opportunity to write about. Some day I'd like to discuss at some length Hal Clement's *Mission of Gravity*, surely outstanding hard-science fiction, wonderfully terse and consistent; Frank Herbert's equally rigorous *Under Pressure (The Dragon in the Sea)*, the artistic equivalent of a black-and-white film, which I find more instructive than *Dune*; Herman Hesse's *Steppenwolf*, a stunningly dramatic Poe-esque fugue: and write extensively in other than fanzines about the peculiar science-and-witchcraft merits of Robert Graves's *Watch the North-wind Rise (Seven Days in New Crete)*.

In the course of my reviewing I've been able to praise some remarkable

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

new talents, such as Glen Cook (Why isn't *The Heirs of Babylon* reprinted?) and Dave Mason (gone almost before we knew he was here, alas, and most of his books ill-starredly with Lancer; still, *Kevan's World* remains outstandingly solid sword and sorcery).

At times, to give *some* balance to this *Fantasy Books* section, I've been happily forced to read authors I might otherwise have missed, such as Samuel Delany. (I'm a slow reader of fiction, you see; I tend to sub-vocalize in order to get the poetry—it if's there!—and I like the savor of words and the feel of phrasing; and so I'm inefficient on those books that are mostly ideas and events and jokes and patter, and that should be speed-read—the long and turgid *Illuminatus* is a fine example of the latter.) Lately I've become aware that much of the best current sword-and-sorcery is being written by women, and although I've reviewed a little of Andre Norton, Ursula LeGuin, and Joanna Russ (*Picnic on Paradise!*), I've been increasingly conscious of my deficiencies in that area. (In the past three days, rather shame-faced that I was so late to do so, I got around to the Darkover novels of Marion Zimmer Bradley and was mightily impressed. The one I read was THE SHATTERED CHAIN, Daw Books, 1976, $1.50. It gave me a new insight on why an author goes to the trouble of building up a science-fiction world instead of working out his ideas and themes in the real world, since they all must have come from the real world originally. One answer is that he can keep his materials clearer—keeps his colors cleaner, as it were—if he mixes them in on a fresh canvas. This is particularly true with people and their problems and conflicts, which are always Bradley's first and main interest. By developing her primitive feminist women, her Amazons, on a fresh primitive planet of her own imagining, she is able to avoid the complications of known modern society and also the hampering clutter of known historical facts that would impede her if she tried to use a known historical setting. At any rate, by her method she manages to give the best analysis I've seen anywhere of the elements of sadism and power drive in male sexuality. She also seems to take the rather puritanic view that sexuality hampers psi talents; well, perhaps it does, and perhaps this matter is analyzed in other Darkover novels. She's certainly no standard feminist, if there be such a critter, but very much her own woman. In any case, *Shattered* is a strangely strong book, with the drama in the journeyings and conversations along the way rather than in the climaxes, which are always played way down.)

Another thing I've been drawn to do by my reviewing is to re-read favorite books of my youth to find out what attracted me to them—most recently Sax Rohmer's THE DREAM DETECTIVE (Dover, 1977, $3.00). I also re-read his *The Green Eyes of Bast*, which allured and terrified me as a teenager. The greatest disappointment (and surprise!) was that there was no wealth of historical detail. Apparently when I was young, someone just had to say to me "Mysterious Egypt" or at most "The Book of the Dead" and my imagination supplied all the rest. (I've noticed the same thing with Edgar Rice Burroughs' Mars. He'd just whisper "pathways scattered with jewels," and my mind would instantly fill in the rest of the picture.) No, Sax Rohmer didn't have to do much historical research. But he had a very sure touch with archetypes. The Bast lady was a beautiful slender young woman who always wore a veil, *and* she was a ravenous leopardess who could jump six-foot hedges in high heels and approach you silently across a dark room with those great green glowing eyes—wow! (And very odd how plain scared Rohmer's super-manly hero was of her—*he* knew his Anima when

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

he saw her, I guess.)

Morris Klaw of *The Dream Detective* turned out to be almost equally simplistic. He apparently only had to say "Crime operates in cycles" and "The emotions generated by murder imprint themselves on the surroundings" (and squirt his forehead with verbena), and that was enough. Re-reading the tales this time, I hoped for something really exotic in his daughter Isis (maybe a touch of incest?) but all she did was be beautiful, wear the latest Parisian styles, discourse learnedly of history (no details—they just *said* she did), and smoke an occasional cigarette. The art of suggestion is a subtle one and—to be honest—the only way I was able to re-read these books was to be a little playful about it, use a sort of "let's pretend" on myself; and I think the experience has given me a possible insight on camp humor—that it's not so much to make fun of past pleasures as to clear the air so we can stop being serious and re-enjoy them a little—? (Oh, well, it was an idea.)

The latitude I've enjoyed in the *Fantasy Books* section has also allowed me to explore literary phenomena and mysteries. (Incidentally, I've just now read a new book about the Mexico-dwelling mystery-man author of *The Treasure of Sierra Madre*, B. Traven, whose award-winning story, "Macario," was first published in English, as far as I know, in the March-April 1953 issue of this magazine under the title of "The Third Guest." THE MYSTERY OF B. TRAVEN, by Judy Stone, William Kaufmann, Inc., 1977, $6.95, is a most interesting account of some 1966 interviews with this recluse writer who also used the various names of Ret Marut, Richard Maurhut, Berick Traven Torsvan, and Hal Croves, and who died March 26, 1969. No question, the man had a passion for mystification and greatly enjoyed talking about himself in the third person—as if he were not one, but several individuals. A fun game, I'd think. He was apparently of German origin—though even that is not certain—and came to Mexico during or just after the First World War, when Ambrose Bierce had just disappeared or died mysteriously there, and when another German author of horror tales, Hans Heinz Ewers may also have been there, to judge from his novel *Vampire* and his short South American tales—though Ewers returned to Germany to die in the bombing of Berlin in World War II. What a strange trio of fantasy-author mystery men to be moving about at much the same time and place in the shadows of war and revolution!)

The Fantasy Novel? Well, it isn't written yet, of course. Ten years of sporadic and far-ranging reviewing have taught me quite a bit, but part of it's been about my own limitations. I really don't care much for classifying stories, or at least for taking such classification very seriously (it's obviously necessary for discussion). And I don't much care, I find, for literary pontificating. Still, some novels and novellas are extraordinarily fascinating and cry out to be written about. Others I'd put into that hypothetical book of mine would be that same H. H. Ewers' *Alraune*, Ward Moore's *Bring the Jubilee*, Stapledon's *Odd John* or *Last and First Men*, Sturgeon's *More Than Human*, Capek's *War with the Newts*, Phil Dick's *The Man in the High Castle*, Pohl's and Kornbluth's *The Space Merchants*, Gore Vidal's *Messiah*, John Hersey's *The Child Buyer*, and William Sloane's *To Walk the Night*.

One more pleasure book-reviewing has provided me has been the wealth of deluxe handsomely illustrated editions I've been able to handle. Outstanding here have been the publications of Donald M. Grant, West Kingston, Rhode Island. His *Dream of X* by William Hope Hodgson is an especially beautiful one. (Latest of these I've seen—and not at all expen-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

sive either—is THE CHRONICLES OF LUCIUS LEFFING, by Joseph Payne Brennan, Grant, 1977, $7.00. Leffing is a pleasantly calm and old-fashioned Connecticut detective addicted to sarsaparilla but not above sipping brandy with relish also. He's best in cases involving the supernatural—the stories "The Dead of Winter Apparition" and "The Nightmare Face" are the best in the book. The six illustrations and the illustrative dust jcket are by John Linton, my favorite among the new artists I've first seen in the magazine *Whispers*. His fine lines and strange textures induce wonderfully eerie moods, while his grotesque skinny-limbed men and slender melancholic women please me mightily.)

Finally, this *Fantasy Books* section has on rare occasions let me put in print a really outstanding review by someone else, such as the one that follows. Margaret Beach is an amateur scholar of Icelandic and of Iceland's eddas and sagas and of Norse matters generally. She's made at least a dozen visits to the island, two of them in midwinter, and I vouch for her remarkable talent for commenting perceptively on writings swordly and sorcerous

—FRITZ LEIBER

THE SWORD OF SHANNARA, by Terry Brooks, Ballantine, 1977, $6.95

Reviewed by Margaret Beach

On the strength of an advertisement and the wish to read the book before reading too much about it, I bought Terry Brooks' *Sword of Shannara*. It's a handsomely produced trade paperback and at $6.95, almost a penny a page, the book would be well worth the price if it were as advertised and the "marvellous odyssey" *Publisher's Weekly* says it is.

The story takes place 2,000 years after an atomic holocaust. Man, much reduced in number and power, shares earth with Dwarf, Elf, Gnome and Troll, and has worked back to a simple agrarian society with a few city-states. However an evil Druid (the Druids are near-immortal learned men), known as the Warlock Lord and hereafter called the W. L. in this review, menaces the world's pleasant peace. His opponent, the moderately sinister-seeming but good Druid Allanon comes to Shady Vale, a village of smallish humans and tells Shea Ohmsford, the innkeeper's adopted half-elven son that he, Shea, is the last of his line and the only one left able to bear the legendary Sword of Shannara against the W.L.

Shea and his foster-brother Flick reluctantly undertake the journey through perilous forest where they are threatened by the W.L.'s agents, flying monsters called Skull Bearers. They acquire another human companion whom the author almost destroys by means of a sentient tree. After many dangers they reach the beautiful Dwarf town of Culhaven. During a conference of mixed beings Shea agrees to join the band seeking the Sword. Allanon leads until he disappears in an underground fight with a Skull Bearer. Unfortunately for the reader, the Druid reappears again after escaping the "furnace pit" by a convenient ladder. The brothers Ohmsford are stung almost fatally by a giant insect and Shea, separated from the others, but befriended by a man and a troll, eventually finds the Sword deep in enemy territory after it has been the "precious possession" of a nasty gnome.

Meanwhile an apocalyptic battle has been developing, the armies of Man, Dwarf and Elf against the W.L.'s evil forces, Gnomes, Trolls, and Skull Bearers for aerial support. Once Shea defeats the W.L. with the Sword which turns out to be a spiritual weapon of sorts rather than one of physical power, the armies of evil disintegrate and everyone goes home.

This is not the promised "Fantasy in the great Tolkien tradition." It is an exercise in telling the story of *Lord of the Rings* in one's own words,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

something which Tolkien did far better than Brooks. Tolkien was, after all, a linguist and a poet who had made the whole of the old North European literature his own. He was able to turn the ancient motifs to new and wonderful ways. Brooks' main source is the Tolkien world, much diminished because it is as perceived by a man of limited artistry, no sense of language, and quite unable to recreate the power and magic of his original. The writing is graceless and much in the style of *The Bobbsey Twins*. Epithets abound: small Valeman, giant Druid, wily Gnome, youthful Commander follow each other in sickening succession. I began to regret my purchase on page 1 when Flick returned home through the woods "and in the pack he carried were several metal implements that rolled and clanked loosely against one another." Whatever they were, the implements are never mentioned again. Their only function is to make a "loose" noise.

On the next page, "an unusual stillness seems to have captivated the entire valley." Later "a man's blond hair was cut short and lay scattered about the broad forehead and around the two small ears." The man had not rushed from the barber's, the hair seems still attached to his scalp. "The W. L. had the entire Mollicos family decimated except for Keltset."

Meals aplenty are eaten but we're hardly told anything about the food except that once dried beef is cooked over an open fire. But then Brooks is an impractical man. He lights wooden houses with torch instead of oil lamp or candle. A mysterious old man saves the brothers Ohmsford from an attacking Skull Bearer by scaring it away with the beam of a 2,000 year old flashlight—Ever-Ready batteries, no doubt.

The Ohmsford Inn is built where no inn could prosper, in an isolated hamlet reached only by forest path. In fact, it's hard to see why there's even a village there. Dull as its name, the inn boasts such amenities as a "lounging porch," "a large lounging room," with "lounging chairs." It makes one long for the delightful inns open to fantasy readers, the Prancing Pony of Bree, the Silver Eel of Lankhmar, and the Old Phoenix of *Midsummer Tempest*, to name the best.

Once in a while Brooks departs from Tolkien and shows that he can act independently. The thief Panamon Creel and his friend Keltset the mute troll are interesting without having *LOTR* antecedents and there is a nice glimpse into Troll society which shows that the author might be worth reading if he would only learn to write. However the bulk of *Sword* is insulting both to its source and its readers, less of a subcreation than a feeble imitation. Its only use could be to send readers back to Tolkien but more than likely it will frighten the more perceptive of the potential fantasy readers away from the genre altogether.

Since writing the above there have been several favorable notices the most important being in the N. Y. *Times Book Review*. Instead of relegating *Sword* to its occasional column of F/SF the Times saw fit to print a laudatory review by Frank Herbert. Herbert finds Brooks "a new myth-making talent" and then makes two points: (1) "Every writer owes a similar debt to those who have come before . . . . . Tolkien's debt was equally obvious." (2) "What Brooks has done is to present a marvellous exposition of why the idea is not the story." Myth and folklore are the common property of all story tellers, but using this is hardly the same as using a contemporary's book as a principal source. The latter may be flattery but it's more like plagiarism. None will argue but that the number of plots is finite and that the differences are in the variations, not the theme.

The Quest is one of the oldest and

(cont. on page 122)

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Editorial (cont. from page 4)

volved in the publishing end of fantasy to the extent that I have, and that for some of you matters which I take for granted are still mysteries. Lee Rouman, of Big Rapids, Michigan, reminds me of this by writing the following letter:

Dear Mr. White,

I've been an SF fan for a long time but have only been aware of the zines for the last couple of years. Being new to this medium, I therefore have a few questions. (I'm sure there must be a virtual multitude of fans who write and ask you these kinds of questions, so maybe you just have a good old form letter already made up. On the other hand, since this is *my* first letter, maybe they don't write.)

Where do all the stories come from? Does the author, after finishing his "masterpiece", peddle it around to the different magazines, trying to get the best price (s)he can, or does he use an agent or is he commissioned, or what?

I've come across the term "slush pile" on several occations. How about a good definition of this and a little description.

Being a good little fan, I naturally have attempted to write a few stories, and have a whole bunch of ideas. (Why are you cringing behind your desk?)

By the way, I picked you to write this letter to because you seem to be the most open and responsive SF editor in both the current and back issues (blessed are they who own SF used book stores, for they shall inherit the market). Ye old fabled used book stores seem to be fairly devoid of AMAZING back issues however, so perhaps you could find me another source.

Thanks for your time.

WHERE DO ALL THE STORIES COME FROM? First of all, they come from a diverse lot of authors. Some of these authors are professional writers. Some are amateurs who write seldom but sell what they write. Others are beginners for whom a story here may be a first, second or third sale. Each has his own method for selling his story, but basically it comes down to the same thing: the story is submitted to editors in succession until one buys it. Quite often the story is sent to the highest paying market first.

But on occasion a piece is suitable only for a particular magazine, in which case the author may query the editor first before writing the story (if the editor isn't interested in the idea, the author may not bother writing it)—*but*, I hasten to point out, only authors already known to the editor in question should try this route. No editor considers queries by authors unkown to him—he insists on seeing the actual story. To take matters closer to hand, Parke Godwin queried me about his story in this issue; I urged him to finish it for me.

And it's also true that on occasion an author is "commissioned" to write a story for a particular magazine. He may be asked to write a story around a cover painting, for instance. Charles Sheffield's story this issue was written because I asked him to write a story specifically for FANTASTIC. (Charles has a hard time writing pure fantasy, and I doubt very much he'd have written this one for anyone else.)

As for agents, they are best used by authors who have already achieved a professional status and need someone to handle the details of marketing, contracts, etc. for them. A good agent frees the author from business details so that he can put his energies into writing. A fair percentage of the stories published here come to us through agents.

The "slush pile" refers to those manuscripts which come in "over the transom," or unsolicited, from new and unknown authors. Traditionally, the "slush pile" contains a great deal

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of totally unpublishable material and every now and then a real gem. It makes an editor's day when he finds such a gem, and that's his reward for slogging through some of the worst writing the mind can imagine for hours on end. A great many of today's authors had their start in the "slush pile." See Marvin Kaye's letter, elsewhere this issue.

What do you do with your stories now that they're on paper?

Well, you have a variety of choices. You can put them in a drawer and leave them there, taking them out for perusal every year or two. (You'd be amazed at how much poorer they get as they sit there; eventually you may find them unreadable.) Or you can show them to friends and relatives and bask in their uncritical praise.

Or you can submit them to an editor. If you do, your stories will end up in his slush pile. If they're good enough, he'll buy them and publish them. If they're not, he'll send them back to you. Try another editor. When you've tried them all, try the drawer.

A story sells itself—once you give it the chance. Who you are makes little difference; a good story is its own justification.

I'm sorry to hear that AMAZING is less often found in the used book stores you frequent; perhaps its readers have held onto their copies. Copies are available from the Publisher, however, who maintains a fairly good supply of nearly every issue published in the last ten or more years. The same is true for FANTASTIC, of course.

—TED WHITE

Fantasy Books (cont. from page 120)

most satisfying of stories perhaps because it symbolizes a universal experience: we all journey in time thinking of each (but the final and unsought) goal as destination rather than way stop. Tolkien did have one great insight. The object of his quest is not acquisition but destruction of the numinous object and salvation is through relinquishing rather than gaining power. This must be his personal interpretation of the *New Testament* but he has restated it in a way which many readers find wonderfully moving.

Herbert, a competant engineer of worlds, should know the difference between Tolkien, the master-builder, and Brooks, a journeyman carpenter.

Few reviewers know or care about fantasy and many, consequently, write as if anything with elves and magic were fantasy, and if heavily enough promoted, must be good. The author's performance is sorry, the publisher's sorrier, and the reviewer's sorriest. LeGuin's essay, *From Elfland to Poughkeepsie*, should be required reading for those claiming literacy in the field. There is no better way to end than with her words, "And lastly I believe that the reader has a responsibility; if he loves the stuff he reads, he has a duty towards it. That duty is to refuse to be fooled; to refuse to permit commercial exploitation of the holy ground of Myth; to reject shoddy work, and save his praise for the real thing. Because when fantasy is the real thing, nothing, after all, is realler."

—MARGARET BEACH

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Letters intended for publication should be typed, double-spaced, on one side of each sheet, and addressed to *According To You*, Box 409, Falls Church, Va. 22046.

My editorial in the December 1977 issue drew nearly as much mail as my editorial, a number of years ago, on Star Trek. *By no coincidence, the topic was the sci-fi successor to* Star Trek, Star Wars. *I prefaced that editorial with a section entitled "As Other See Us," dealing with a column by Michael Rogers in* Rolling Stone *on science fiction and* Star Wars. *From Rogers comes the following:*

Dear Ted White:

I enjoyed and agreed with your editorial (FANTASTIC, December 1977), although, as the enclosed page indicates, it wasn't exactly the first time I'd heard those sentiments. [Rogers encloses a copy of the letters page from *Rolling Stone* for Sept. 22, 1977, on which Steve Brown—stf magazine critic for *Science Fiction Review*—responds to his previous column, and he replies. In the course of his reply Rogers states, "I don't need to be persuaded about the legitimacy of SF—I've been reading it since I was nine and have written it since I was 15. My only worry is that SF—in a bid for 'legitimacy'—is now adopting too many of the stylish but unreadable tricks of new fiction. Science-fiction writers—and readers—shouldn't be distracted by questions of 'legitimacy,' because roots are nothing to be ashamed of—especially, say, when they grow on Mars."]

Next time I write a column about SF I think I'll submit it to a panel of judges to determine its clarity. You people are really *touchy*—although I can't exactly understand why. You're mining what is probably the last lively and popular vein of literature left in this country . . .

MICHAEL ROGERS
Outside magazine

Call it touchiness if you like, but we've learned to distrust what the mass media says about us (Peter S. Prescott of Newsweek *regularly makes appearances on dart-boards belonging to stf fans and professionals all over the country); it's rarely accurate and usually betrays a bizarre bias against the field.*—TW

Dear Ted,

I agree with you that the true nature of science fiction is not truly understood by non-fans. However, your condemnation of George Lucas for passing off *Star Wars* as science fiction, when it obviously is not, is unfair. George Lucas has gone out of his way since the movie came out to insure that people realize what it is—science fantasy, not science fiction. He has said this over and over, but apparently you haven't been listening. Furthermore, George Lucas is listed as having been the author of the book because he actually *is* the author.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

It's pretty obvious that the only thing you know about the movie is what you saw on the screen. And what you saw doesn't sound like what I and everyone else saw. A movie doesn't have to be "relevant" to be good. Sure *Star Wars* is corny, sure it's illogical, sure it's inacurate. However, unlike many of the stories you print, it entertains, and in my opinion, that is of far more importance. Entertainment is the point of all art.

And finally, just because Lucas did the substantial *American Grafiti*, doesn't mean that he is from this day forward restricted to such a viewpoint, or does it? If it does then how do you justify writing *Doc Phoenix* for *Weird Heroes*?

PERRY WILLIS
7139 Grand Valley
San Antonio, Texas 78242

Sure, Lucas (or his PR office) has also said that Star Wars *is "space fantasy," and reminds us that it is "actually" set in the "far distant past." However, the mass media and the general public have paid no attention to these disclaimers, treating them with all the respect they actually deserve.* Star Wars *remains "Sci-Fi." As a matter of fact, I have in my possession reams of press-kit materials on* Star Wars*—stuff which collectors have assured me is already worth a tidy sum—and you'd be surprised by the amount of behind-the-scenes information on the movie which has come my way. And I stand behind my statement on the authorship of the novelization of the movie. (The current trend in publishing is to pretend that the director or producer—whoever takes primary credit for the movie—actually wrote the book. In fact movie novelizations are written from shooting scripts by anonymous authors who rarely own any rights to the books they write.* Close Encounters of the Third Kind *has given birth to a similar novelization.) If I read your argument correctly, entertainment has nothing to do with logical exposition or characterization or accuracy of detail. What a relief this insight will be for those among us who have labored for so long before such false gods.*—TW

Dear Mr. White:

I have just reread your editorial it the December issue of FANTASTIC for the umpteenth time. I read it often, for it contains the only other negative opinion of *Star Wars* that I have yet encountered.

I have been reading science fiction for nearly ten years. Weaned on Andre Norton and Robert Heinlein, I have sought quality SF for years. Needless, to say, the movie, *Star Wars*, does not qualify. I did not enjoy this movie at all. Until your editorial appeared, I feared that I, alone, held this opinion, for even my trusted SF friends raved to me about the merits of this movie. I could not see any. Yes, the movie did have some good special effects. But, I feel that it is not enough to paint pretty pictures in a film. Each film must stand on the merits inherent within its story.

Star Wars had no merits whatsoever. Every character was flat and predictable; all of the acting was wooden; the plot was bad; *etc.* I can go on forever simply enumerating the faults of this movie. Nor was I able to overlook these faults while I was watching the movie. The glaring inconsistencies constantly diverted my attention away from the action of the film.

Yet I am proud to say that I have only seen this movie once and have no desire to repeat the experience. Nor do I believe that I will care to see any of the sequels to *Star Wars I* (which doubtless will be infinite in number).

I do hope that the public response to this movie will show film producers that there is a market for SF films. I fear that Hollywood will respond with a deluge of B-grade sci fi movies.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Still, if they begin making SF films, even they should get it right once.

LAVINA MEADOWS
1732 Penn Avenue
Jeannette, Pa. 15644

The problem seems to be that movie people have rarely understood what science fiction actually is. *For most of them it's the special effects. And for entirely too many it's flying saucers and alien monsters—a deluge of which are now on the way.*—TW

Dear Ted,

Your December editorial is full of undeniable truth, but it bears far too much resemblance to the familiar scenario of crossing a desert on a hot summer day, coming to the oasis, and meeting a concerned government official who says, "I'm sorry, but you can't drink this water. We haven't proved that it's safe yet. I'm sure that you wouldn't mind the minor inconvenience of walking forty miles due west to the next oasis."

Star Wars is an oasis in a desert of filmed filth. It is a good piece of escapism that will not shame those who brought family and friends to see it—and far more thought was put into it than is typically put into television programs or many other movies. It is disturbing that those who made the movie would so dishonestly hawk a hackwork book, but they did. The science could have been better, but the movie was basically fantasy; maybe somebody did go to a dictionary to find out about parsecs and just *knew* that light years had to be a unit of time, and since a parsec is so many light years . . . . It could have been better, and maybe the sequels will be, but it is superior to the X-rated junk that fills so many screens.

Annie Hall might be another oasis, and maybe its example will cause more to pop up. That would be nice.

But have we become convinced that what is good for one person—no matter which one—is good for everyone else? Is the RDA fixed by the U.S. Government ideal for everybody?

Nobody can feel good when another person characterizes his lifework as basically dishonest. By the same token, you should no more expect Michael Rogers to say "I am in the process of creating a dishonest piece of trash" than you would expect a new mother to be revolted by the ugliness of her baby; Rogers might be creating a dishonest piece of trash and that mother may have borne the ugliest blob ever to disgrace the face of the earth, but how could either live with the knowledge that all of their time and effort would have been more appreciated if it had ended in abortion?

It is a sign of our times that Michael Rogers has so little respect for the rabble. The ideas he expressed are to be expected from a society that would force everyone to pay for airbags because some people don't fasten their seatbelts, a society that cannot allow grain alcohol to be used for fuel for fear it might be drunk untaxed, a society whose cigarette packages must advise that cigarettes should not be smoked, a society crawling with narcs to prevent its citizens from escaping reality. When the great unwashed must have their lives so planned for them, how could they withstand the truth? Who could respect such scum?

If we want the public to raise their opinion of science fiction, we must try to see that the 10% that is not crap really exists and is visible. More of us must risk rejection slips and spend time and effort making the quality of what we appreciate undeniable—our crap must be as gold to the mundanes. You are working at this, and more of us must join you.

And if many of us like gimmicks and baubles and use them to seduce innocents from the outside world into actually using their brains, what is the harm in that? "Use it or lose it" is a natural law, as sailors on shore leave

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

have known for centuries, and there are too few thinkers in existence for us to daintily insist that only delight in purest logic is proper cause to think. And one reason that the hardware of science fiction is now well known is that a lot of it has now been invented—even things like hovercraft and projected real image holograms and the Soviet beam weapon.

JUDSON MARSHALL HORNING
4701 East Kessler Boulevard
Indianapolis, Ind. 46220

Dear Ted,

While I am in total agreement with the first half of your December editorial in FANTASTIC, I must take exception to your comments on the movie *Star Wars*.

First of all, don't you think that refering to *Star Wars* as "sci-fi" is just a little harsh? I generally reserve that term for movies like "The Return of the Son Of Godzilla Meets Frankenstien", Japanese-Italian co-productions starring a rubber monster suit and scripted by the director's six year old son. Surely *Star Wars* deserves better than that, if only for its high production values. Whatever its faults; *Star Wars* is far too enjoyable a movie to be lumped in with the monstrosities on "Late-Night Sci-Fi Theatre".

So what should we call it then—science fiction? I think not, for as you correctly point out, *Star Wars* makes for bad SF (whatever "SF" stands for these days), and it's hard to see how such a fun movie could be bad anything. Besides, science fiction, even bad science fiction, generally looks to the future for its settings, tries to predict or at least speculate on where man might be headed; but *Star Wars* makes no pretense at projection or even realism. Like a fairy tale, it begins Once upon a time, far, far away; and in looking to the past it also looks to *our* pasts, our childhoods, to form a distillation of every Hollywood fairy tale we ever loved as kids.

Fairy tale then? Yes, but a very special type of fairy tale, one which incorporates sense of wonder, vast scale, and fast action: The Space Opera.

What is Space Opera if *Star Wars* isn't? Sure the dialogue in *Star Wars* left something to be desired, but when was the last time you could read a stf pulp from 1930 without snickering at the bad science or high camp dialogue? *Star Wars* isn't bad science fiction—it's great space opera. So good in fact that I have become convinced that space opera was meant for the screen. It's certainly easier to allow yourself to let go reality and enjoy the movie than it is to *read* the same story in book form. Just imagine what E.E. "Doc" Smith could have done with a 10 million dollar budget. . . .

Or to approach your criticism from a slightly different angle, why take *Star Wars* so seriously? It wasn't intended as a serious work of science fiction or anything else. It's just a good fun Buck Rodgers movie played for laughs. You're right of course when you complain that it could have been just as fun *and* made as a proper sf movie, but that's really beside the point. It's like saying that if Harold Robbins was a better writer he could have been writing literature instead of schlock, or that if Hollywood had taste it could produce great drama, or if pigs had wings. . . . I think we would all agree that it would be nice if there were some good science fiction movies around, but I'm not about to hold my breath waiting for it to happen. Let's settle for what we can reasonably expect, namely good space opera.

I suspect the real reason you're upset is because you're afraid that the fantastic success of *Star Wars* will burn that image of "science fiction" indelibly in the public mind. True, but we could do worse. Better *Star Wars* than "The Thing That Ate Washington" or "The Creature From

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Black Lagoon Returns Yet Again". And maybe, just maybe somebody somewhere will take advantage of the *Star Wars* fad to produce a *real* science fiction movie.

One final note: Are you *sure* Lucas *didn't* write the book version? It's so badly written that I find it hard to believe that it's anything other than Lucas' original movie treatment. Surely an experienced ghost writer would have smoothed out some of the rough spots?

ROBERT RUNTE
10957-88 Ave.
Edmonton, Alberta
Canada T6G 0Y9

You're right: that is *what upsets me. And what also bothers me is the excuses given for* Star Wars' *weaknesses. If we're going to talk fairy tales, I'd say that* Star Wars *as a fairy tale is like a clichéd rehash of several Old Favorites published in an expensive coffee-table edition. All the money and all the thought went into the illustrations and printing; the story itself and the way it was written were regarded as relatively unimportant. Yes (to switch labels)* Star Wars *is Space Opera—that has been obvious from the beginning. But—*good *Space Opera? As for the book version, had it been in fact "Lucas' original movie treatment," it would have been a great deal shorter and included scenes and settings which were changed when the movie began production (the desert world was originally a jungle world until Lucas decided, on location, that a jungle was too unpleasant to work in; the Dune references followed the switch in locations).*—TW

Dear Ted,

Some comments on the December FANTASTIC. First of all bravo for your editorial. I'm sure you'll get lots of poison pen letters from *Star Wars* trekkies (an intentionally derogatory term I may or may not have coined) who take the movie religiously and consider any criticism of it a personal affront. I'm sure you have encountered this type at conventions. In fan circles it's frequently controversial when I say that *Star Wars* is good cinema and terrible science fiction. You're right of course about the plot hinging on terminal stupidity by the entire Galactic Empire. My theory is that the Stormtroopers are all far-gone heroin junkies recruited via time travel from the streets of Harlem—they have the shakes so bad they can't hit the side of a gas giant, and would be more lethal throwing rocks. Of course the photography is beautiful. In visuals the film is a quantum leap, even over *2001*, but in content it is a long step backward from *Forbidden Planet* or even the better episodes of *Star Drek*. It really isn't an *imaginative* film at all, since everything is cribbed from something previous. It works entirely in a pre-set frame of reference with previously determined characters, just like a formula western. The fact that trekkie-like groups devoted to *Star Wars* have cropped up all over the country just shows how improverished some poeple's imagination is. I wonder what they discuss—the actual content of the film is so pedestrian. I am reminded, cynically, of a remark Ben Bova once made: "There is a growing science fiction audience among people who are practically illiterate." He was talking about records, but it applies here too.

DARRELL SCHWEITZER
113 Deepdale Rd.
Strafford, Pa. 19087

Dear Mr. White:

Having been an avid reader of fantasy and science fiction since the days when my father read fairy tales to me, I became very upset when I read your biting comments on *Star Wars*.

Perhaps, having seen the film three times and having read the book, I'm prejudiced. But I'm convinced that you took along a stringent set of rules for Good Science Fiction when you

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

saw the film. I think you examined it, rather than experienced it. As Tolkien said, in his essay, "On Fairy Stories," in order for fantasy to work, one must be willing to actively participate.

Star Wars may not be Science Fiction in your mind, but it is to a lot of people, who exist outside the Mystic Order of Organized Fandom. Many of the things I've read which were reputed to be Good Science Fiction, were meaningless heaps of words. I realize, of course, that meaning may be lurking around somewhere beneath the surface, but no reader likes the feeling that the author is making fun of his imagination. *Star Wars* at least lays its cards on the table. The terminology isn't accurate, but so what? If we want realism, we'll forget Merlin and Conan and read the evening paper.

Yes, the force is a deus ex machina. But where would modern literature be today if someone hadn't chronicled the interventions of various gods into human affairs?

Why are the Lofty Science Fiction Writers picking on *Star Wars* and not *The Lord of the Rings*? They share many characteristics: simple people battling a great evil power; a wizard skilled in the arts of goodness who battles a representative of that evil, dies, and returns transformed; an untried and half-willing youth who undertakes a quest decisive in the outcome of the rebellion; a lone woman who challenges the power of evil and wins. Yet, no one criticizes *Star Wars* for being a bastardized *Lord of the Rings*. It is being attacked for not meeting neat little requirements. [*You're wrong—that criticism has been made.*—TW]

Fantasy and science fiction are tools which promote better understanding of our world. *Star Wars*, if only a minor tool, may well lead people to examine good science fiction, and maybe we'll be able to get together and make some sense of the mad tea party we call reality.

Anyway, Mr. White, I think your duty lies not in keeping the 90% of trash out of our reach; trash is in the eye of the beholder. Rather, it is the propagation of the understanding science fiction and fantasy provides. Keeping the purity of the art is superfluous.

LYNETTE GOSHEN
6402 Logan Road
Drayton Plains, Mi 48020

As long as people accept black and white definitions of good and evil like those presented in Star Wars, *I don't think a "better understanding of our world" will result. Most of the conflicts our world faces today boil down to each side holding the belief that they are Good and their antagonists are Evil, a simplistic quasi-religious position which makes mutual understanding and accomodation difficult, if not impossible.* Star Wars *panders to the public's desire for simple Good vs. Evil situations in which Good wins by virtue of its 'goodness'. But I don't advocate suppressing* Star Wars *(I rarely advocate suppressing anything), and I have no desire to keep the movie out of your reach. My criticism is a very simple one: I don't think* Star Wars *was well done on anything beyond the visual level. I criticise its craft and construction and basic premise. I maintain that it would have cost little more in effort and nothing more in dollars to have invested the movie with believable characters in a more plausible situation. And I feel this was not done because Lucas' conception of "sci-fi" is that it doesn't require believable characters or a plausible situation.* Star Wars *echoes with its creators' contempt for reasoned thought—the actual backbone of all real science fiction.*—TW

Dear Ted,

Thank you for the good word to reader Dennis Daley who did not care for J. Adrian (Gad!) Fillmore, but

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

then this type of story simply is not for every fantasy buff. It does demand, in the manner of a true pastiche, a deliberate imitation of the literary milieu being referred to. If Mr. Daley doesn't care for Victorian prose, he could hardly take kindly to a Doyle-Stoker-Dickens amalgam. I suppose we who like this sort of foolery must face up to the potential exclusivist nature of it. But with most of my livelihood earned writing mysteries (about as tough a form as the fugue) and non-fiction, I occasionally have to become passing mad with prose that reflects the literary pretensions I suppose I once had. (My collaborator and friend, Parke Godwin, puts it another way: "The Umbrella stories are you writing with your shoes off.")

I was appalled at the fatuousness and self-contradiction of reader A. C. Clinton. While he was surely writing with good intentions, he most charitably can be said to be misinformed about the processes of running a genre magazine, particularly one in the fantasy category. This genre has had difficulties for years, and some of the finest of publications have disappeared. It is marvelous how FANTASTIC manages to survive, sometimes, I suspect, by dint of courage and finger-crossing.

By way of personal testimonial, I'd like to note that I, for one, came in over the transom. I doubt that either you or Sol Cohen knew who I was, since my writing was in a different category of fiction entirely. (I exclude the two anthologies I edited; they are secrets that the publishers seem determined to keep from the fantasy fan). If there is a dearth of new writers in your magazine, I would suggest it is because you don't receive the submissions necessary to foster a fantasy renaissance. And yet, despite that, there are certainly a number of new writers who have happily discovered FANTASTIC and what I consider an open-door policy to able new writers!

MARVIN KAYE
The Open Book
New York, N.Y. 10024

Dear Ted,

I have been intending to write you a letter about FANTASTIC for several years now, but cowardice has always prevented me at the last moment. Everything I wanted to say about the magazine and your handling of it has been said before—and much more eloquently than I could ever phrase it. However, A. C. Clinton's letter in the latest issue of FANTASTIC (Dec. 1977), the most hostile missive I've read in many years, has determained me to finally write.

Clinton's charges, needless to say, are without any basis. He is, of course, entitled to his opinion, but I do think he should have tried to substantiate his criticisms; he did not. In fact, he seemed only interested in stirring up a bit of controversy and soundly kicking a man while he's down. As for FANTASTIC, I think it is the best fantasy mag now available; its stories and articles are the very best the genre has to offer (by both new and veteran writers) and the artists (Fabian and Olsen in particular) are extremely talented. Also, I disagree with Clinton regarding FANTASTIC's physical appearance; it is by no means 'shoddy-looking' and I definitely like it better than, say, *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction*, which is virtually artless. Moreover, Clinton's charge that you are 'indifferent, even cold' toward new talent is ridiculous; too many young talents have appeared in your pages for this to be true—and if Clinton followed the mag regularly, he would certainly realize this. So, in reality, what the matter boils down to is Clinton's disgruntlement because the mag does not attain *his* standard of excellence, and I for one am glad that it doesn't: FANTASTIC is perfect just the way it is! (By the way, I'm one of those Carter fans you men-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tioned in your response to Clinton—I'm doing a sectional tribute to him in my upcoming fanzine *Valhalla* #1—and I think his statement about Lin was not only pointless but in bad taste as well. I wonder how many stories Mr. Clinton has sold to professional markets lately. . . . ?).

As for the rest of the issue, I found all the stories good, but three in particular impressed me as being the best:

"Priapus" by Sprague de Camp would rank #1 on my list of favorites; it is witty, full of twists and turns, and is written as only Sprague de Camp could write it! (Incidentally, that you published De Camp's stories and articles was one of the main reasons I first began collecting FANTASTIC years ago; he is the gentleman responsible for my current love affair with the fantasy genre!) Moreover, I'm secretly in love with Denise Newbury . . . which is why the "Willy Newbury" stories are among my favorite LSdeC creations.

"The Pillars of Hell" by Lin Carter is a fine continuation of the author's 'Dragon People' series. Carter possesses a talent for describing barbaric or prehistoric cultures, and for drawing the reader right in the story with the hero. This latter, I feel, is the indication of a good story-teller!

"A Trick of the Tail" by Mike Milhaus is one of those delightful tales which leaves you with a warm, comfortable glow long after you've laid the story aside. Anathae is one of the most engaging heroines in fantasy history; a she-demon any male would love to get his hands on. I look forward to each new adventure with her and Willis Baxter. More please, Mike!

Well, that's enough for now, I guess. Maybe I'll be able to work up enough courage to write you again. In the meantime, Ted, ignore letters like Clinton's and keep up the good work! Fantasy needs you—and *we* need you!

LOAY HALL
802 East Bridge
Blackwell, Okla. 74631

Milhaus says he's woring on a novel about Willis & Anathae—one which takes them away from the campus of old P.U. Now that we're back to bimonthly, we may be able to serialize it here.—TW

ON SALE IN SEPTEMBER FANTASTIC

THE MESA IS A LONELY PLACE TO DREAM AND SCREAM AND DREAM by **GRANIA DAVIS, A SENSE OF DISASTER** by **CHRISTOPHER ANVIL, LEASEHOLD** by **WALLACE WEST, DEATH ETERNAL** by **RAYMOND JONES, THE HAIRY PARENTS** by **A BERTRAM CHANDLER PRIDEY GOETH** by **DAVID R. BENCH, DEMON AND DEMOISELLE** by **JANET FOX, A MALADY OF MAGICKS** by **CRAIG SHAW GARDNER** and many other stories and features.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Profit From Pleasure...
WRITING!

Perhaps you can write... blessed with a flair for words, an instinct for the dramatic and a fine story sense. Maybe you do have the potential to make people laugh, cry, love, hate, yearn, sympathize and THINK. But you'll never harness your natural powers until you prove you have them. Find out if you have potential as a writer.

FREE APTITUDE TEST!

Take the test by mail without obligation. Let the Writers Institute editors analyze your basic talents. There is no obligation.

The word-hungry world of communications (literature, broadcasting, theatre, newspapers, etc.) offers qualified writers ample income opportunities. More than 19,000 periodicals are published regularly in the U.S. alone. Fewer than 15% of their authors are 'big-name' writers. So you have every reason to give yourself a fair chance. Send for our FREE TEST, then decide about your future as a writer. Write to:

WRITERS INSTITUTE

division of

Newspaper Institute of America

100 Mamaroneck Ave. Dept. 93-05-8
Mamaroneck, New York 10543

Licensed by the New York State Education Dept.
● Accredited Member of
National Home Study Council

MARTIAN SUNSET

Genuine NASA Viking 1 high-quality FULL-COLOR ART PRINT. 22"x34". Ideal for permanent framing & display. Beautiful. $9.95 plus $1.05 ins. pstg.

WOODSTOCK PRODUCTS

P.O. Box 4087, Dept. SAG, Beverly Hills, CA 90213

BEST BY MAIL

Rates: Write National, Box 5, Sarasota, Fl. 33578

OF INTEREST TO ALL

TELEGRAPHING Thought. The mystery fully explained. $2.00. Rodgers Telegraphing, Box 59, Sparta, N.J. 07871

BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES

$3000.00 MONTHLY. Immediate income. Stuff envelopes at home. Information, send self-addressed stamped envelope. Cottage, Box 730-EFN, Baldwin Park, Ca. 91706

BUMPER Sticker Printing Device. Cheap, simple, portable. Free details. Bumper, POB 22791(FQ), Tampa, Fl. 33622

EARN $30,000 annually in mail order. Start immediately! Blane, 223 Hurstbourne, Louisville, Ky. 40222

CASH with YOUR CAMERA!

Earn $5,000 to $15,000 yearly in spare time selling simple photos to over 4,000 eager buyers! A single photo sells 15 or more times! Easy. GUARANTEED method. Send 13¢ stamp for FREE details!

PICTURE PROFITS, Dept. BDJ-45
P.O. Box 36, East Islip, N.Y. 11730

LEARN TO READ MUSIC...INSTANTLY

If you've ever wanted to be able to read music, but thought it was too complicated or would take too long, this exciting book is the solution to the problem. It reduces music to its 3 basic elements: Melody, rhythm, and harmony, and then shows how each element can be mastered almost overnight. Hilarious drawings make the book fun to read and act as "memory-joggers" so that you won't forget what you've learned. Write for free brochure. HALLMARK SALES, 1735 A East 33rd St., New York, N.Y. 11234

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

CLASSIFIED ADVERTISEMENTS

RATES AND TERMS: Classified ads of the SCIENCE FICTION ADVENTURE GROUP (2 books), AMAZING and FANTASTIC, afford readers and advertisers alike an opportunity to buy, sell and trade in the WORLD'S LARGEST SCIENCE FICTION Market Place at reduced rates. Only 90 cents a word (including name and address). Minimum order $9.00 (10 words). Payment must accompany copy except when ads are placed by Accredited Agency. Frequency discount 5% for 6 months, 10% for 12 months paid in advance. All copy subject to publisher's approval. Closing Date: 1st of the 5th preceding month (for example, Sept. issue closes April 1st). Send order and remittance to PRINT ADVERTISING REP. INC., 386 Lexington Ave., New York, N.Y. 10017

BOOKS & MAGAZINES

NAME the book—we'll find it for you! Out of print book specialists. All subjects. (Title alone is sufficient). Write—no obligations. Books-On-File, Dept. AMF, Union City, N.J. 07087

WANTED TO BUY—science fiction magazines from 1926 to 1960. Harry Bennett, 6763 Hollywood Blvd., Hollywood, Ca. 90028

EVERMIST, semi-pro fantasy quarterly, $3.00 yearly, P.O. Box 27, LaBelle, Florida 33935

COMPLETE illustrated catalog of all "IN Print" SF and Fantasy paperbacks and hardcover books. Over 1500 titles. No obligations. We buy "lots" collections and libraries of SF books and magazines. Send offers. Purple Unicorn Books, 4532-A10 London Road, Duluth, Minn. 55804

Out of print paperbacks. Send wants, SASE. McCrae, 8120 Buttonwood, Citrus Heights, Ca. 95610

BOOKS & MAGAZINE READERS! Send wants: S & S Books, 80 North Wilder, A-24, St. Paul, Minn. 55104

SF SWOP CLUB. Send ten paperbacks plus $2.00 receive ten Paperbacks. McCrae, 8120 Buttonwood, Citrus Heights, Ca. 95610

THRUST SF REVIEW now features My Column by Ted White, formerly in Algol, $1.50, P.O. Box 746, Adelphi, MD 20783.

SELLING PULPS, SHADOW, DOC SAVAGE, AMAZING, ASTROUNDING, DISNEY, EC'S, T.V. GUIDES, COMIC BOOKS, MAGAZINES, MOVIE MERCHANDISE. 1900-1977. CATALOGUES $1.00. ROGOFSKY, BOX AF 1102, FLUSHING, NEW YORK 11354.

MISCELLANEOUS

INTERGALACTIC ALLIANCE official notice: Earthpersons of courage, serve in interstellar missions for EOS, Eternal Order of Starjourneyers. Manual, Emblem-communicator, "UFO" plans, more, given Members. Info 50¢: 1254—7th Ave. San Frnacisco 94122.

PERSONALS

DATES GALORE! Meet singles—anywhere. Call DATELINE, toll-free (800) 451-3245.

JAPANESE Girls Make Wonderful Wives. We have large number of listings. Many interested in marriage. Only $1.00 brings application, photos, names, descriptions, etc. Japan International, Box 146-SF, Carnelian Bay, California 95711.

BEAUTIFUL Mexican-Oriental girls Needing American Boy-Friends. FREE Details "Actual" photos. World, Box 3876-SFA, San Diego, Ca. 92103

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

BEST BY MAIL

Rates: Write National, Box 5, Sarasota, Fl. 33578

LOANS BY MAIL

SIGNATURE Loans up to $25,000 by mail. No collateral. Information. $1.00 refundable: Robinson Enterprises, Box 38, Augusta, Ga. 30903

HYPNOSIS

SLEEP Learning. 92% effective. Reduce tension, control habits. Details. A.S.R. Foundation, Box 23429N, Ft. Lauderdale, Fl. 33307

EMPLOYMENT INFORMATION

ROCKY Mountain Jobs!! Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Wyoming! Free details. Intermountain-3A1, 3650 Upland, Boise, Id. 83705

STAMPS

SCANDINAVIAN 70 different stamps only 40¢ payment with USA mint stamps new issues. Kimber, 14301, Varby, Sweden

CATALOGUES

CORVAIR Catalog - 2800 different parts- $2.15: Clark's Corvair, Shelburne, Ma. 01370. 413-625-9092

PERSONAL—MISCELLANEOUS

WARTS. VERGO® Cream is gentle, painless, safe, easy. Hospital tested. Recommended by doctors. Use on all parts of body. Unconditionally guaranteed. Buy Vergo® at better pharmacies.

GIRL Singer wishes correspondence. Send $5.00 for record & photograph. Miss Leebonny, Box 76, Changewater, N.J. 07831

JOB HUNTING? Startling results with five new resumes. Open closed doors. $3.00. Christy Associates, Box 277GS, Ridgewood, N.J. 07450

GIRLS write you first. Details: Moore, Box 56, Englewood, Fl. 33533

ALONE? Respectable adults! Confidential introductions! Romance, marriage. Details: Cosa Agency, PO Box 1916, Wichita, Ks. 67201

HAVE You Lived Before This Life? Answers! $7.00 book. OCA, Box 330-S, Vacaville, Ca. 95688

UNATTACHED? Meet your ideal mate! Computerized matching, nationwide. Established 1966. Inexpensive. "Team", 1270 Broadway, NYC 10001

YOUR Electrothought by Trees, etc. New projects, $3. Sensitron, Box 1155, St. Augustine, Fl. 32084

ARE YOU lonely? Photographs, descriptions, men, women. $1.00 postpaid. Ladysmith, Box 5686MG, Lighthouse Point, Fl. 33064

TEST Your ESP, $2.00. Hemisphere, 20-14 Elm, Franklinville, N.Y. 14737

THEATRICAL special effects: Colored explosions, smoke, lighting effects. Catalog $2.00. Limelight, Box 1229, N.Y.C. 10025

OVERCOME shyness meeting people. Try 150 Conversation Sparklers booklet. Provocative contemporary quips. Helpful for speeches, articles, too. Only $2.00 postpaid. Holly Bee Press, Dept. T, Box 96, Swarthmore, Pa. 19081

NOW TRY Eckankar! Learn about Ancient Spiritual Science of Soul-Travel. Write to: Eckankar, Box 3100(G), Menlo Park, Ca. 94025

FREE 36-page Adult Catalog. New, 7247-MJ Eccles, Dallas, Tx. 75227

PROJECT your thoughts! Newly discovered "ESP Machine" really works! Amazing psychic power instantly! Details: Trine, Box 195-D, Hancock, Wi. 54943

HEY! Men would you like to look like a real man? $3.00. He-Man, PO Box 13286-M, K.C., Ks. 66113

SPACEFLEET-Strange UFO's Revealed. Illustrated science-fiction. Send $2.95 to: Spectrum Publishing, Dept. C, 4080 Siskiyou Ave., Santa Rosa, Ca. 95405

COINS

COIN Detectors - 20 brands. Publication free! Treasure Hunters, Box 53, Mesquite, Tx. 75149

HEALTH & BEAUTY

LONGER Real Eyelashes Secret-$8.95. 615-17 Majestic Bldg., San Antonio, Tx. 78205

FOR A beautiful complexion $10.95. Check or money order. Teen's, PO Box 13326-T, K.C., Ks. 66113

MONEYMAKING OPPORTUNITIES

MAKE Big Money! "Proven" mailorder! Sample $1.00. Searchlight, 505 Fifth Ave., N.Y.C. 10017

AMAZING Money! $9 profit on $10 sale mailing circulars. Details free. Comtech, D-D1, 521 S. Central, Medford, Or. 97501

$275.00 WEEKLY publishing at home! Details and sample $1.00! E. M. Young, Box 6125, Bridgewater, N.J. 08807

STUFF envelopes $550/thousand. Start immediately. Send 25c & stamped-addressed envelope. Benterprises, Box 1368-MJ2 Decatur, Ga. 30031

IMMEDIATE earnings stuffing envelopes. Beginner's Kit, $1.00. Lewcards, Brea, Ca. 92621

POEMS needed. Famous stars record our songs. That's why we offer $10,000.00 cash awards, plus royalties, free publishing and protection. For proof, send your poems to: Country Creations, Box 2057, Nashville, Tn. 37214. Studio One.

ADDRESS envelopes. Details 25¢. 530 Cherry St., Clarksdale, Ms. 38614

MERCHANDISE FOR SALE

MAGIC Tooth Fairy Kit, $1.00. Miller Co., 2600-TM Loyola, Austin, Tx. 78723

FORMULAS $1.00 each deodorant, preshave, depilatory, brush-cleaner. Gonzer, Stag Park, Burgaw, N.C. 28425

SOOTHING, Healing Mandala! Send photo, stamped envelope, and $1: Kwilloughby, Box 317, Fairacres, N.M. 88033

BUBBLEGUM Balls. 2 big lbs. $6.00 postpaid (sugarless $8.00). 10 giant jawbreaker bonus. Gumballs Unlimited-GM, Box "S", Far Rockaway, N.Y. 11691

MASON Shoes. Comfort, quality. 816-TM Colorado Ave., Palo Alto, Ca. 94303

PIPEDREAM: World's most versatile pipe. Walnut, self storing & snuffing. $4.00-delivered. American Young Company, P.O. Box 3297, Baltimore, Md. 21228

UNIQUE and unusual screw pendant $1.99½¢. Beautiful ½¢ English coin back in change. Carter Enterprises, Box 716, Wayne, W.Va. 25570

LOVE adventure? Challenge wild white water in open canoes. Starting primer $2. Experts pamphlet with two action pictures $4. Written by expert who taught years how to do most dangerous waters without injury. Douglas, 1215 Wylie, Norman, Ok. 73069

FREE wholesale costume jewelry catalogs. Make big money without investment. Benjamin Wholesale, (Dept. N), Box 19018, Detroit, MI. 48219

BRASS Roach Clip - disguised as key $3.00. Garden Party, 29375 Halstead, Farmington, Mi. 48018

SAVE UP TO 300%

on the cost of prescription drugs. "Results Guaranteed". Send for full details booklet. $2.95 to:

WEDE Reports, Box 4714, Dept. 30
Manchester, N.H. 03108

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

R.E. Haerle 127512F
USASA Scty. Det. Rgn. I
Box 3353
Ft. Meade, MD. 20755

Secrets entrusted to a few

The Unpublished Facts of Life

THERE are some things that can not be generally told—*things you ought to know.* Great truths are dangerous to some — but factors for *personal power* and *accomplishment* in the hands of those who understand them. Behind the tales of the miracles and mysteries of the ancients, lie centuries of their secret probing into nature's laws—their amazing discoveries of *the hidden processes of man's mind,* and *the mastery of life's problems.* Once shrouded in mystery to avoid their destruction by mass fear and ignorance, these facts remain a useful heritage for the thousands of men and women who privately use them in their homes today.

THIS FREE BOOK

The Rosicrucians (not a religious organization), an age-old brotherhood of learning, have preserved this secret wisdom in their archives for centuries. *They now invite you to share the practical helpfulness of their teachings.* Write today for a free copy of the book, "The Mastery of Life." Within its pages may lie a new life of opportunity for you. Address: Scribe O.H.I.

SEND THIS COUPON

Scribe O.H.I.
The ROSICRUCIANS (AMORC)
San Jose, California 95191 U.S.A.

Please send me the *free* book, *The Mastery of Life,* which explains how I may learn to use my faculties and powers of mind.

Name_____

Address_____

City_____

State_____ Zip Code_____

Please Include Your Zip Code

The Rosicrucians

SAN JOSE (AMORC) CALIFORNIA 95191 U.S.A.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED